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YAHOO! INTERNET LIFE®

Artificial or Real?

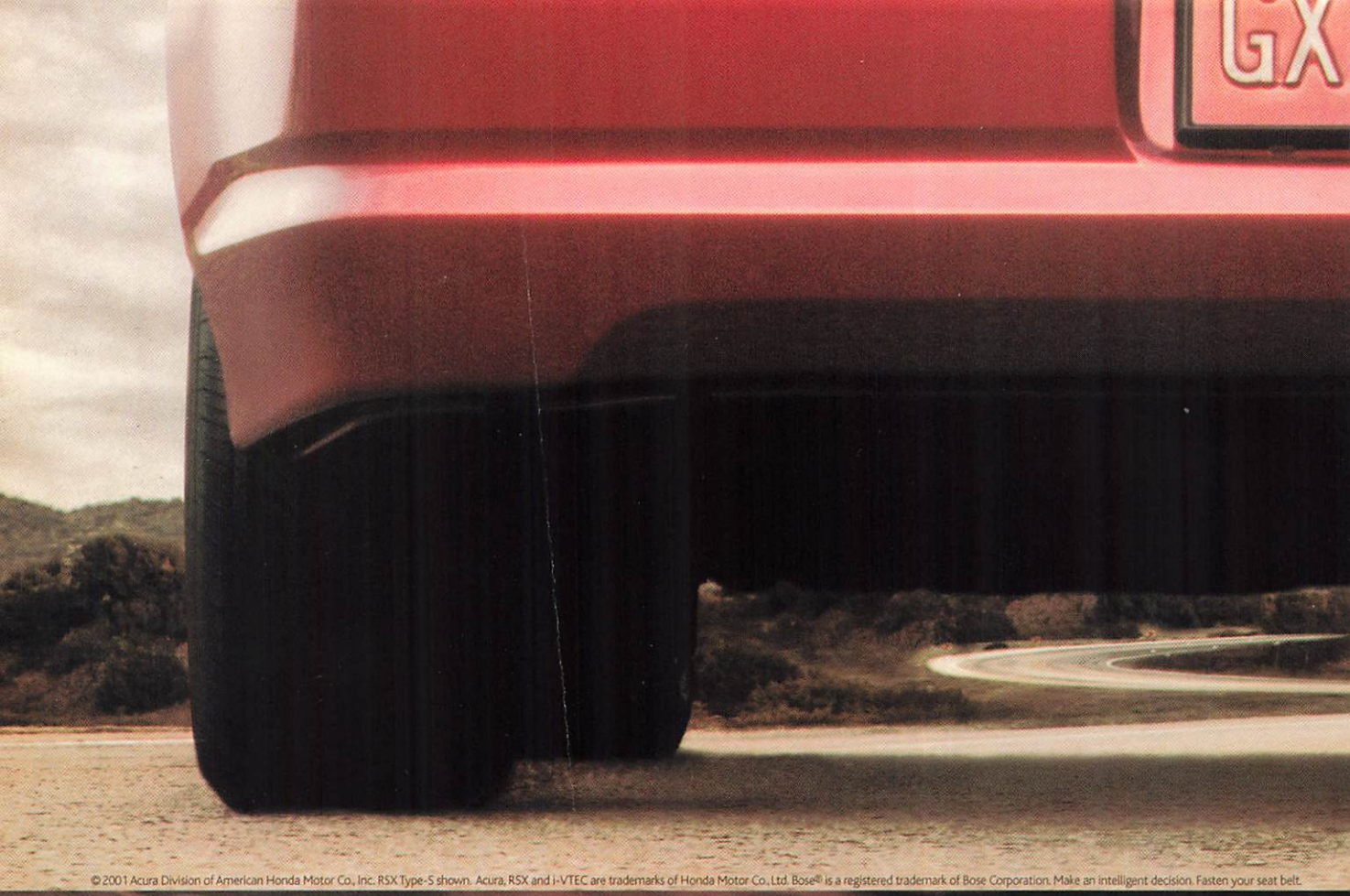
Final Fantasy's Aki Knows...
And She's Not Telling

HOW ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE MAKES THE NET SMARTER

JAPANESE GIRLS ARE THE FUTURE

BEST JOB SITES

RUSHKOFF NOVEL



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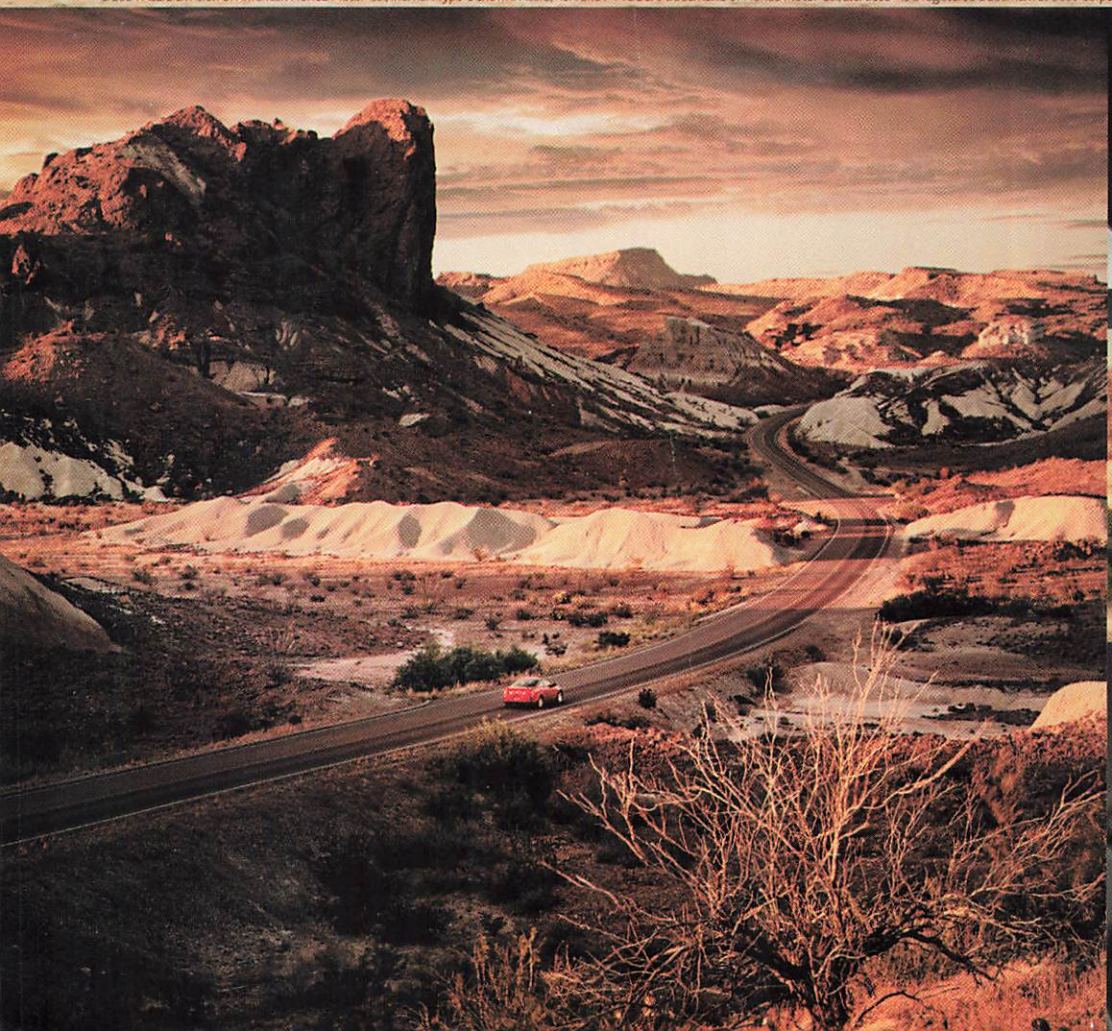

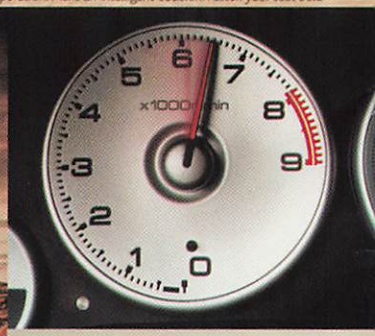

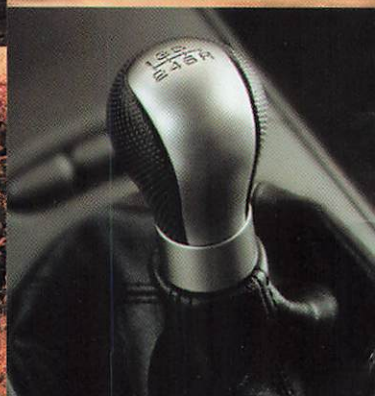

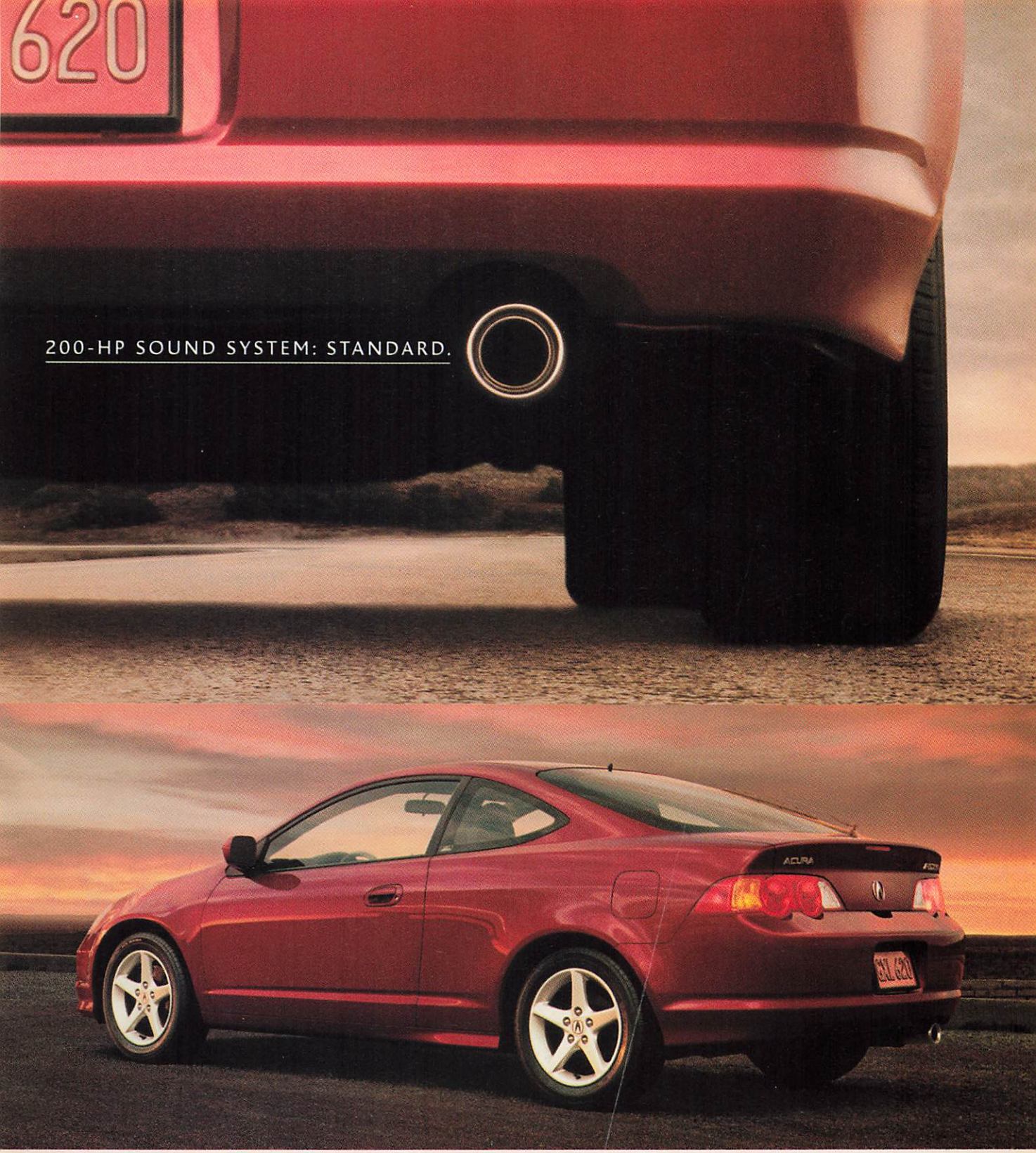

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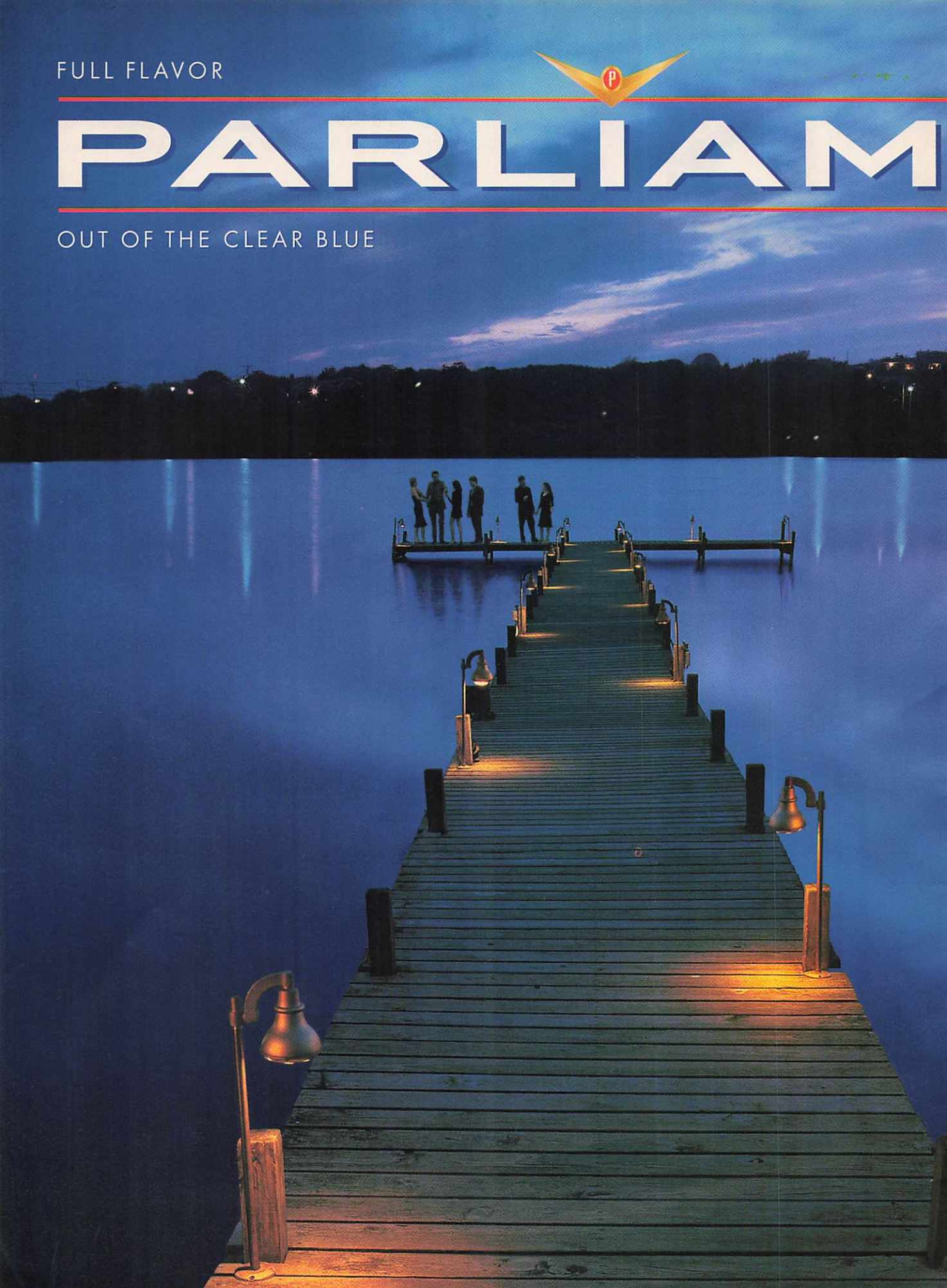
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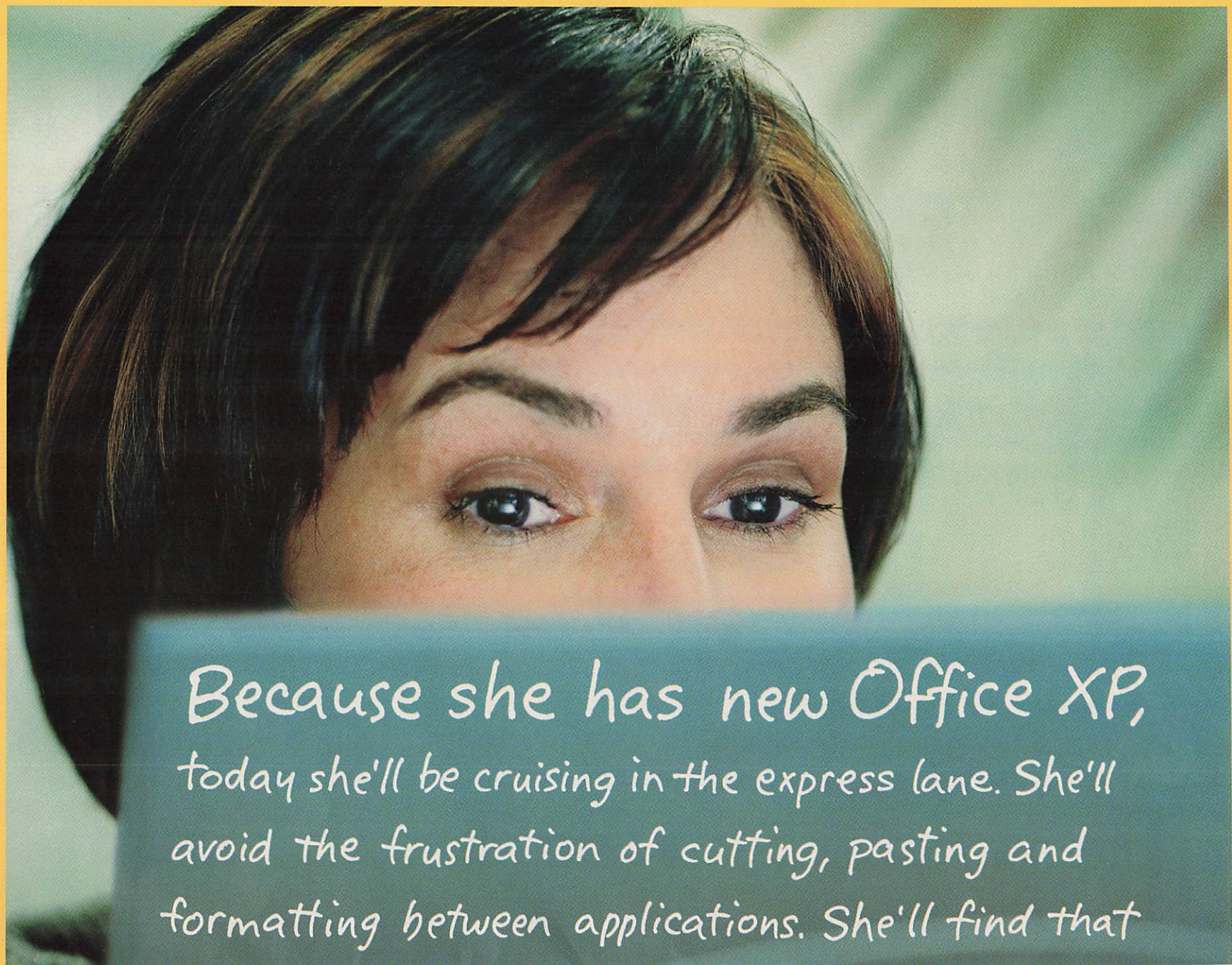
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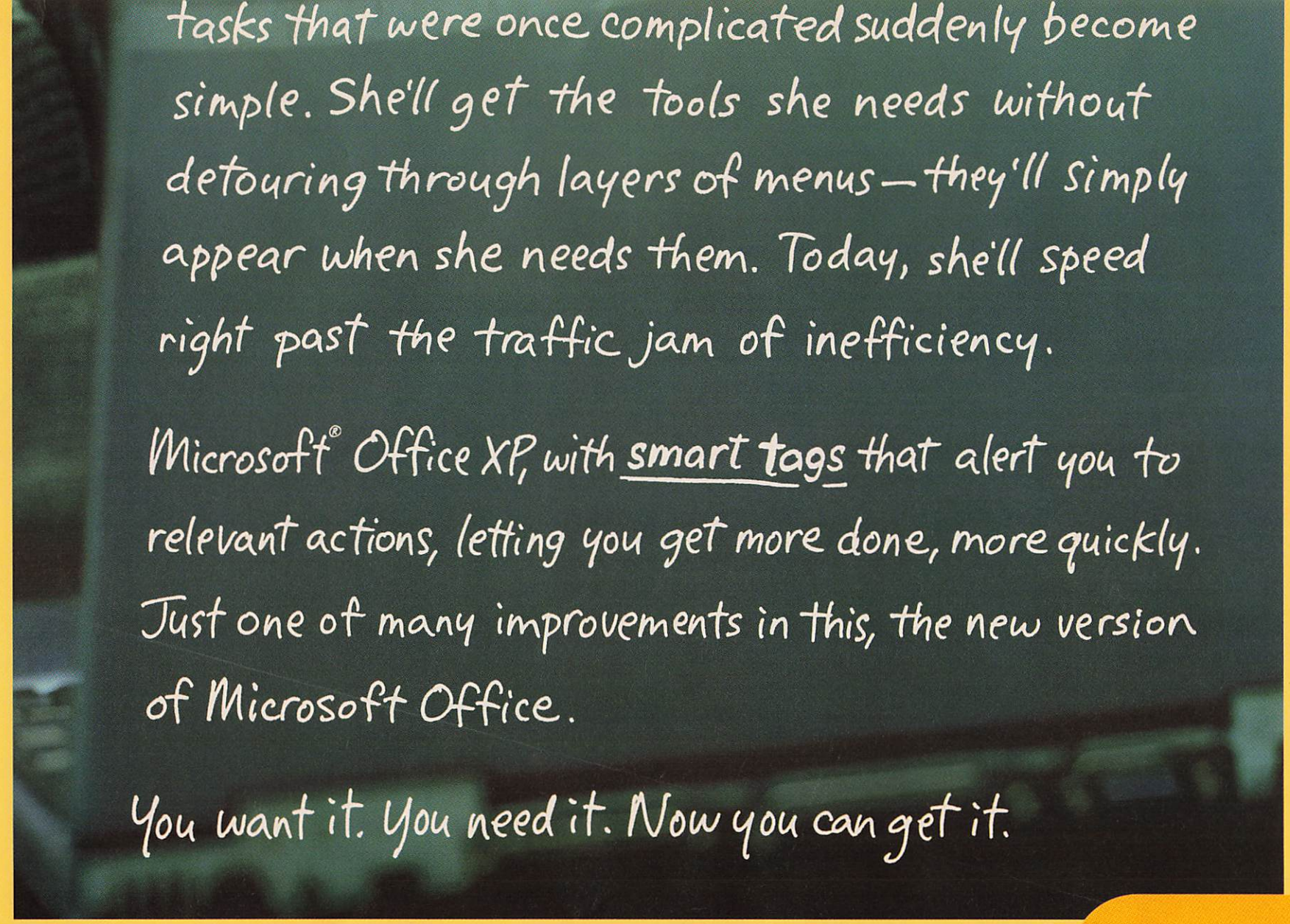

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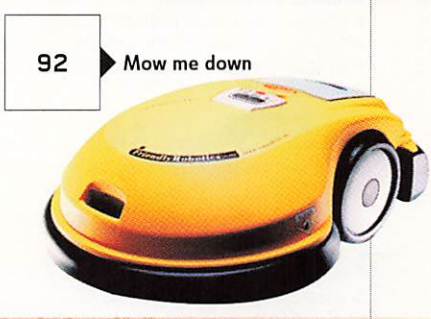

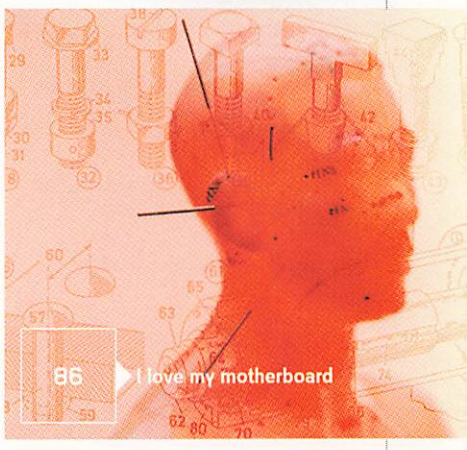

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- Internal 56K Capable[6] FaxModem
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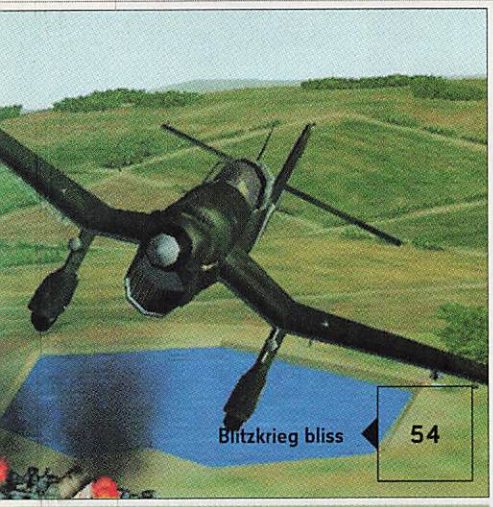

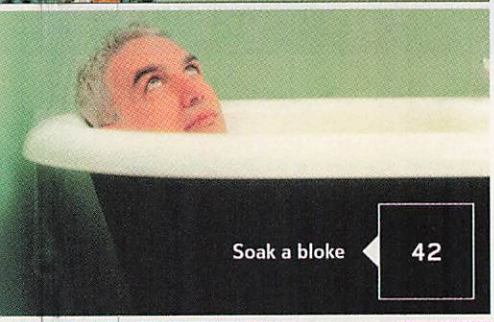

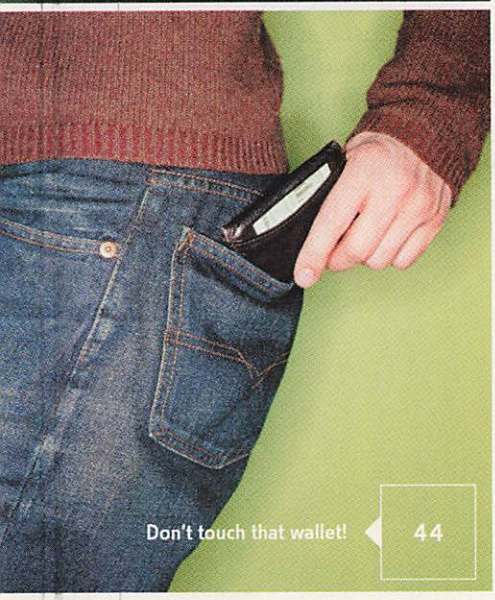

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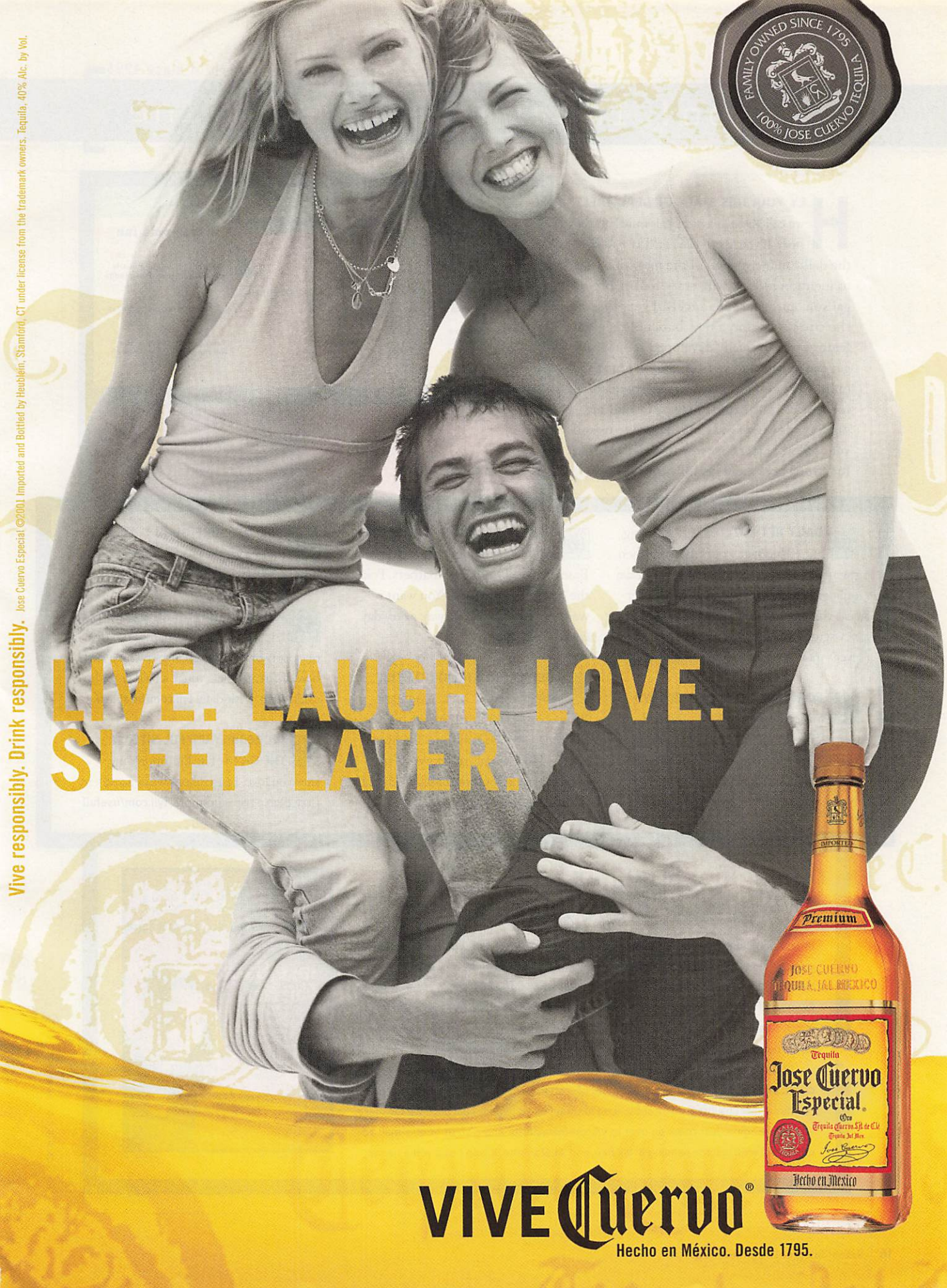
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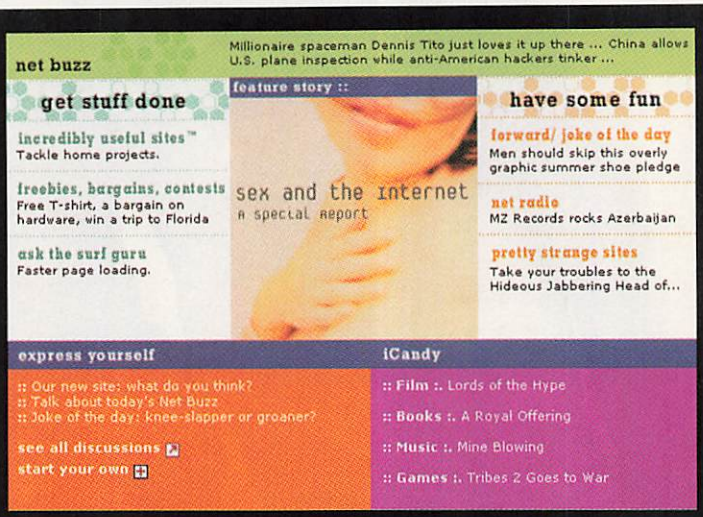

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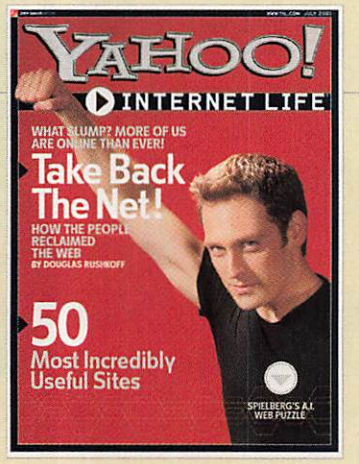
How to Stay Faithful

In case you didn't read this little box o' text last month (don't tell us you were two-timing with that minx of a letters page again!), we wanted to drill this into your skull one more time: If you bookmarked us before May 1, your links no longer take you to *Y-Life*'s site. To fix yourself up, just bop on over to **YIL.com** and bookmark us again. We apologize for the inconvenience, but look at it this way: It's a great opportunity to see what's going on today in our daily columns. (See, we knew we could turn that frown around!)

Also, if you subscribed to our daily newsletter—which is packed with news, special offers, and musings from the twisted mind of Josh Robertson—you may have been unceremoniously unsubscribed (or subscribed to something different). Fear not—we can make you whole again. Just come on over to **yil.com/newsletter** and give us your e-mail address, and we'll resume sending it. It's free, and what's more, it won't cost you a penny.



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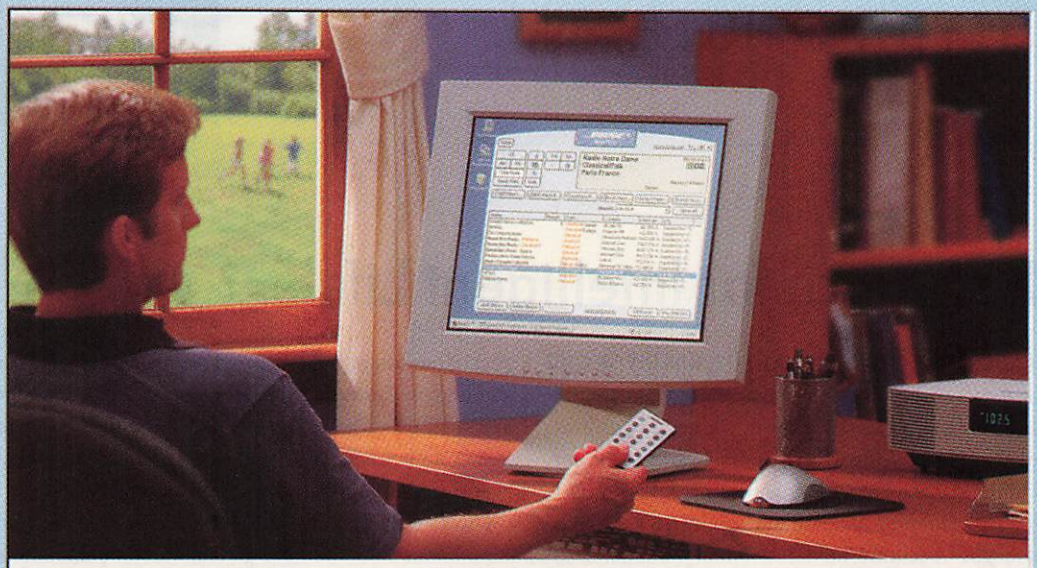

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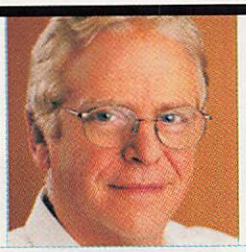

The Search for Intelligent Life

YOU KNOW, OF COURSE, THAT FOR HARDWORKING magazine journalists, inducing movie stars to pose for covers can be a trial and a challenge: the limos, the dressing room, the publicists, the stylists, the fresh flowers, the bottled water, the trays of sushi, the boy toys....This month, I'm pleased to report, we premiere an entirely new breed of cover girl—beautiful, undemanding, a joy to work with. Her name is Aki. She's the star of the upcoming *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within,* and she was created entirely by computer moviemaking magic. Director of photography **GAIL HENRY**, fresh from both the screening room and the photo lab, reports that Aki was remarkably free of ego, except when it came to her hair. We can't blame Aki for that, since preview audiences agreed that her mane is so realistic, it's mesmerizing. Says Henry, "My first thought was, *Wow, who's Aki's hairdresser? I know girls who would kill to get that stylist's phone number!*"

IT CAN READ, BUT DOES IT THINK?

Aki and her virtual costars are part of the summer's booming sci-fi trend involving tomb raiders, androids, smart-aleck apes, and artificially intelligent folks of all types (just the tip of the Spielberg, in other words). And that was the excuse we needed to commission technology writer **CHARLES PLATT** to give us a state-of-the-art look at how far (or near) we've come with artificial intelligence, online and off. In "Soul in the Machine," Platt provides an informed reality check. And in "Hey, Asimo, Bring Me a Beer!" **GARETH BRANWYN** gives the existing robot population an intelligence test that leaves our sheet-metal brethren a few points short of Mensa.

Meanwhile, contributing writer **CHARLES C. MANN** returned after a month in Japan to report on another aspect of our future: the one being divined by young hypertechnophile Japanese girls wielding advanced cell phones and their own sense of style. Read about it in "Why 14-Year-Old Japanese Girls Rule the World," because whatever they're doing, you're going to be doing, too.

To round out our sci-fi summer issue, we break new ground with the publication of an excerpt from *Exit Strategy,* **DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF**'s new novel, set in the near future following the "Great Correction." We're pleased to participate in something exciting and near to our Netty heart: The full text of *Exit Strategy* will also be serialized, chapter by chapter, on our Web site **[yil.com/exitstrategy]**. What makes this unprecedented is that this is taking place *before* print publication, and Rushkoff intends to incorporate some of the online commentary and reader footnotes into the e-book as well as the paper-published edition. It may be the world's first truly interactive novel.

Ground control to Major Barry: Yes, I should remind readers that there's plenty of earthbound reading in the issue, too, including our annual Web Lab that awards gold stars to the best job-searching sites. It's very grounded, very useful, very relevant to *these* times. No fantasy there, unless it leads to your dream job.

X Barry Golson

BARRY GOLSON, EDITOR IN CHIEF

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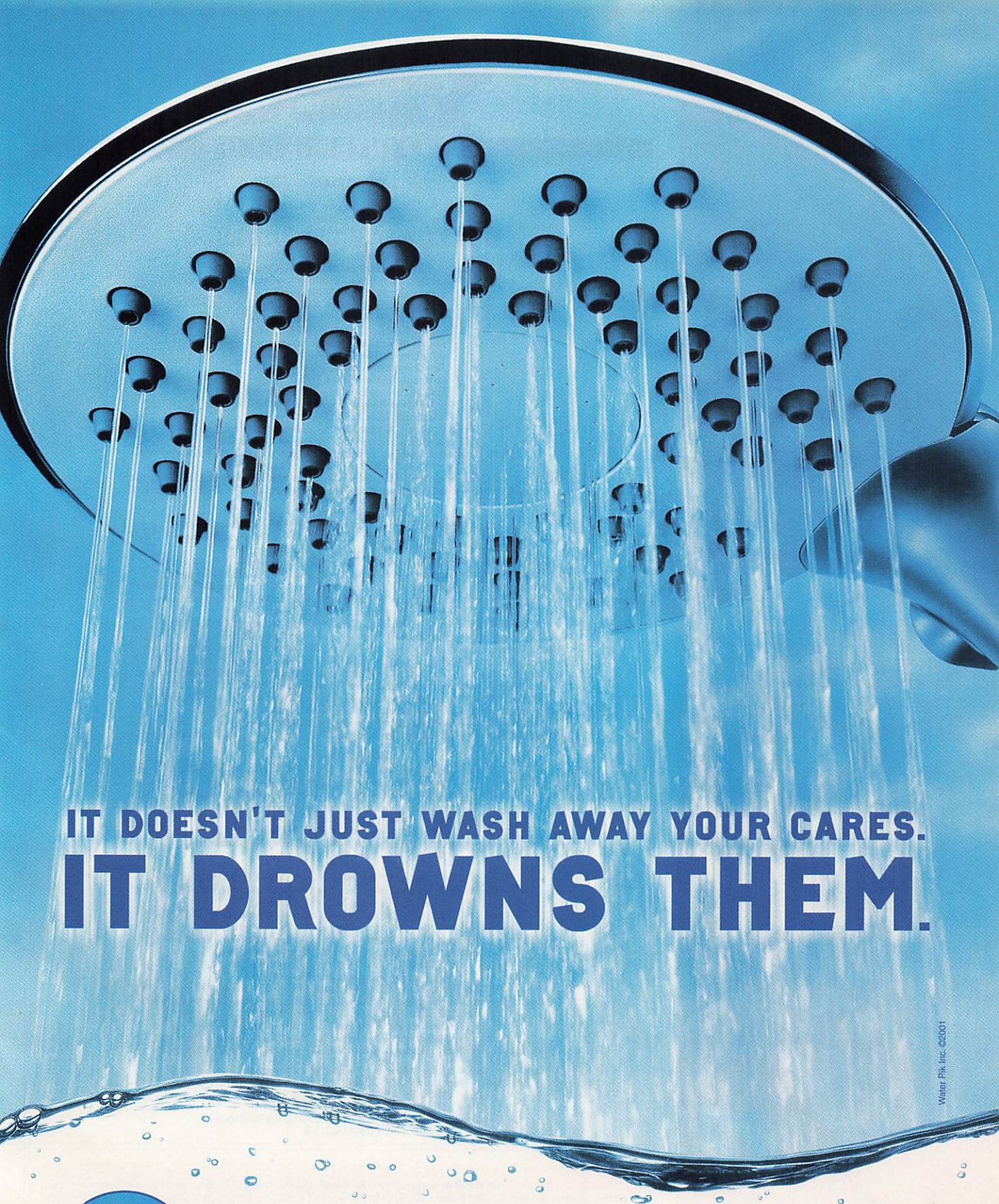

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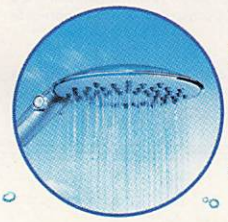

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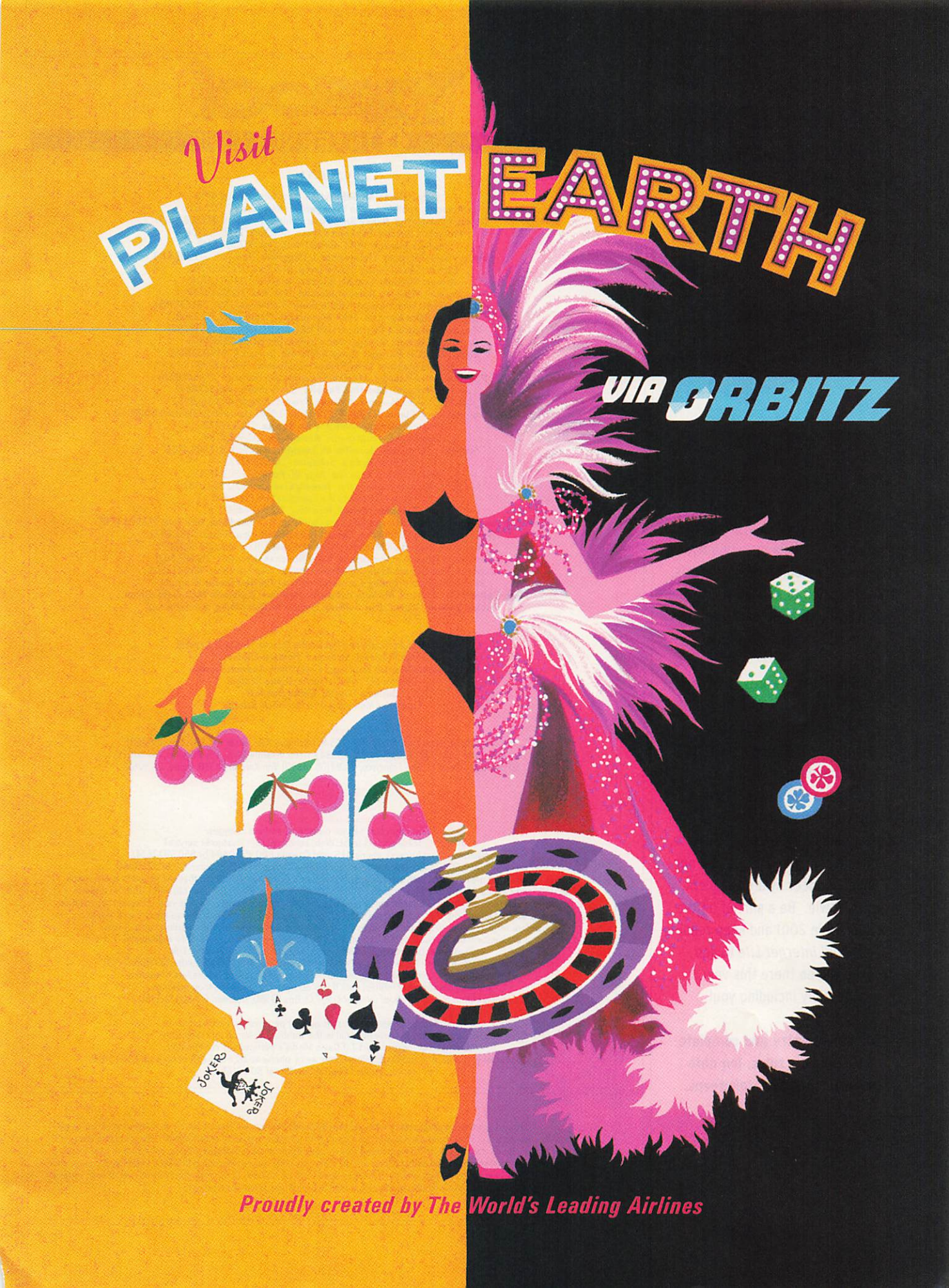
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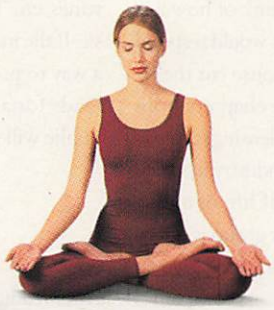

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MESSAGE CENTER

WHO SAYS PRINT ISN'T INTERACTIVE?

Letters to the editor: Write to yilmail@ziffdavis.com

CDS, RESPUN

Charles Mann offers a well-intentioned proposal for the music industry, but he failed to do his homework before writing his story "A Whole New Vision for Napster" [June '01, page 86]. Mann is mistaken about the level of "versioning" that exists within the music industry. In fact, the industry effectively used versioning to kill off consumer demand for vinyl and cassettes by promoting "CD only" bonus tracks and premiums.

The industry continues to package and repackage music in a variety of forms with a wide range of pricing: the boxed set, audiophile editions (usually "half-mastered" or "gold-plated" CDs), "legacy" reissues (remastered classic albums with extra unreleased, foreign, or live tracks), bargain rereleases (bare-bones packages labeled as "Nice Price" or "Sound Saver" CDs), and the standard release CDs that make up the majority of sales. Record companies also reluctantly issue less cost-efficient packages that still enjoy some consumer demand, such as singles and extended-mix singles, maxi-singles (usually three- to five-track CDs), and club vinyl (for club deejays and remixes).

Mann's distribution method would punish fans by forcing them either to buy a bare-bones CD package with a couple of songs chopped off or to cough up another $15 for the complete package. (If you want to use a print analogy, think of how authors and readers would respond if a publishing house cut the final two or three chapters from a book before releasing it to paperback.) In an industry in which the average shelf life of an individual artist or group is only a few months, Mann's model would also hurt the record companies and the artists by not making a product available while it's still hot. After three months of radio overkill, listeners might decide they want neither version.

R.K. WALTERS
@aol.com

Charles C. Mann responds: Yes, the record labels do put out music in all the forms that Walters describes. But get real: The occasional release of boxed sets, "gold-plated" CDs, and so on pales beside the multiple repurposing of content routinely performed by print publishers and movie studios. Releasing music initially in a premium-priced package, as I suggest, would not make music unavailable while it's hot, but would allow the labels to sell it at a price that reflects its "hotness"—just as in other content industries.

Nor would it "punish the consumer" any more than does initially releasing movies in a one-view-only format at movie theaters, or books at hardcover prices. Indeed, the last time the record industry introduced a high-priced music format—the compact disc—consumers jumped at the chance to pay more money in such numbers that, as Walters notes, the move inadvertently killed off the other formats. As for the "bare-bones" package he decries, what else is a videotape of a movie or a paperback book but a poor quality, bare-bones version of a movie or book? Yet videotapes and paperbacks are essential components of their industries.

BUILD IT AND WE WILL PAY

In response to Charles Mann ["A Whole New Vision for Napster"]: Consumers are always willing to pay for what they want—expensive cars, clothes, wines, etc. The public loves music. If the industry comes up with a way to provide quality downloads for a minimal price, the public will pay.

BILL MOBLEY
@twave.net

PLEASE DON'T FEED THE BEAST

After reading the piece by Mann and the interview with Prince [page 80], I absolutely support paying hardworking artists for their creations directly, but I will resist at every turn "feeding the beast" that is the music industry. The industry's hubris is sickening. These are the same goons who tried to convince us it was illegal and immoral to record cassettes of LPs that we purchased.

JOSEPH SMITH
@aol.com

DISSING DSL

Roger Ebert is always informative and entertaining ["Life in the Slow Lane, Again," June '01, page 60]. So I am sorry to see him buy into this nonsense that newer must be better and that faster access is essential when connecting to the Net. I subscribe to *Y-Life* because it will supply me with information. Now I find myself reading that Internet life at 56Kbps isn't worth it and downloading is impossible. That, not the lack of DSL, is what really wastes my time.

MARC DROGIN
@drogin.net

WHO YOU GONNA CALL?

As the owner of a small business, I was surprised at David Sheff's response [Message Center, June '01, page 23] to criticism that he had overlooked service as an important consideration when deciding whether to buy a vacuum cleaner online or at a local store for his Old Way/Net Way column. I cannot count how many potential customers I have lost to the Internet only to have them return a few months later with the item they bought needing repair. Few people stop to think about where they'll turn for help after the Internet has run small entre-

SITE GAG

"I THINK I'LL WAIT UNTIL IT COMES OUT ON MY CELL PHONE."

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preneurs like myself out of business. The response from Sheff and others like him is that good, competitive businesses will survive. But Sheff forgets that small businesses outnumber stores like Wal-Mart and Best Buy four to one. And we don't have deep pockets to ride out trying times while consumers test new buying methods.

The Internet is a great resource. But we will likely find over the next few years that when it comes to purchasing some items, the old-fashioned way is still the best way.

I'd like to hear from Sheff about that $50 savings again should his vacuum ever sputter.

TODD MANNING
@cjnetworks.com

TAXI DAYS PASSED

Hats off to Ty Wenger for "Taxicab Confessions" [June '01, page 92]. It was an interesting read. It also took me back: Ahh, the little cupcake I dated at CNET, my first DSL, my online diary, Napster....It seems like yesterday we were celebrating *Y-Life*'s birthday together. *[Carson was featured in "How America Uses the Net," September '98, page 84. —Ed.]* Less than a year after that, I ended up driving a Net-enabled Yahoo! taxi! Go figure.

BUD CARSON
@myfarecity.com

YOU'RE MAKING US BLUSH

I have been setting aside the renewal invitations from *Y-Life* because—with time spent on the computer, trying to keep up with other publications, and leading an actual as well as a virtual life—I had not gotten around to reading the issues that I received. When the June issue arrived, I decided to read it to see whether I wanted to renew. The first two articles I looked at convinced me. "Taxicab Confessions" and the Roger Ebert column, "Life in the Slow Lane, Again," exhibited the freshest, cleverest writing I've run across recently. I first subscribed to *Y-Life* for practical help in using the Internet; I'm renewing for the pleasure of reading the articles.

TURLEY MINGS
@pop.earthlink.net

WHACK THIS COMET

Angela Gunn is dead-on right in calling Comet Cursor a "viral infection" ["A Code for Those Who Write Code," May '01, page 66]. However, in the same issue [Click! Around the Net, "Try This," page 28] you suggest the Sopranos Mob Name Generator site, which installed Comet Cursor on my system upon loading.

In spite of this gripe, *Y-Life* is an excellent magazine. I've been with you since the third issue and have been very pleased with your evolution. The new look is pleasing to the eye and easy to read.

LARRY ALDRICH
@rica.net

UPDATE: *Myspace.com and idrive.com (Click! Home & Office, July 2001) no longer offer online storage services to consumers. Also, 555-1212.com ("Most Incredibly Useful Sites," July 2001) has discontinued its free phone number lookup service. See the site for pricing plans.*

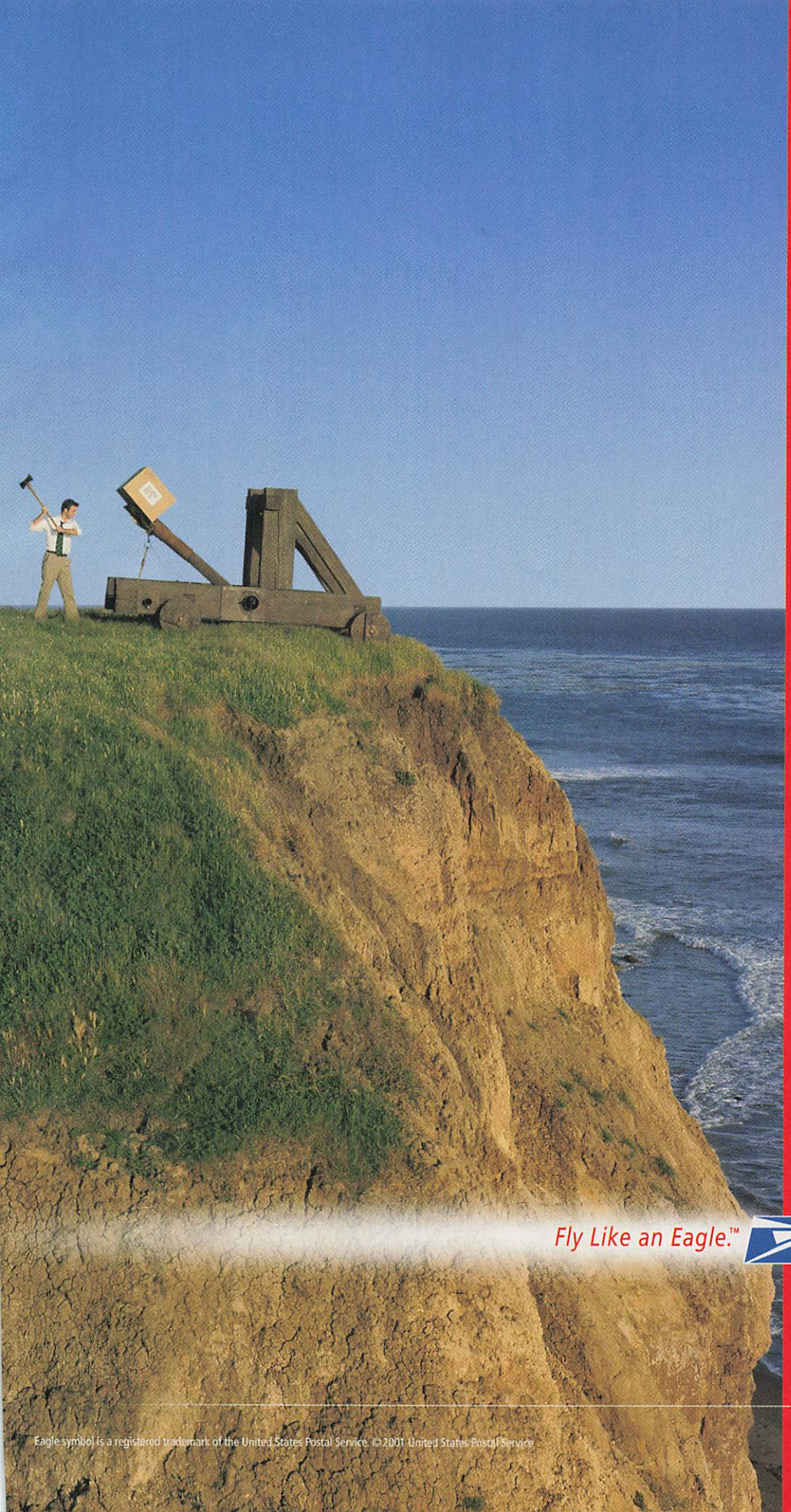
Hey, you talkin' to us? We hope so! Write to yilmail@ziffdavis.com.

Y-LIFE NET POLL

Q: Which dead dot-com do you miss the most?

24%	Kozmo.com
22%	eToys.com
17%	Pets.com
3%	Garden.com
32%	None of the above

Poll reflects responses of visitors to yil.com in May and June 2001.



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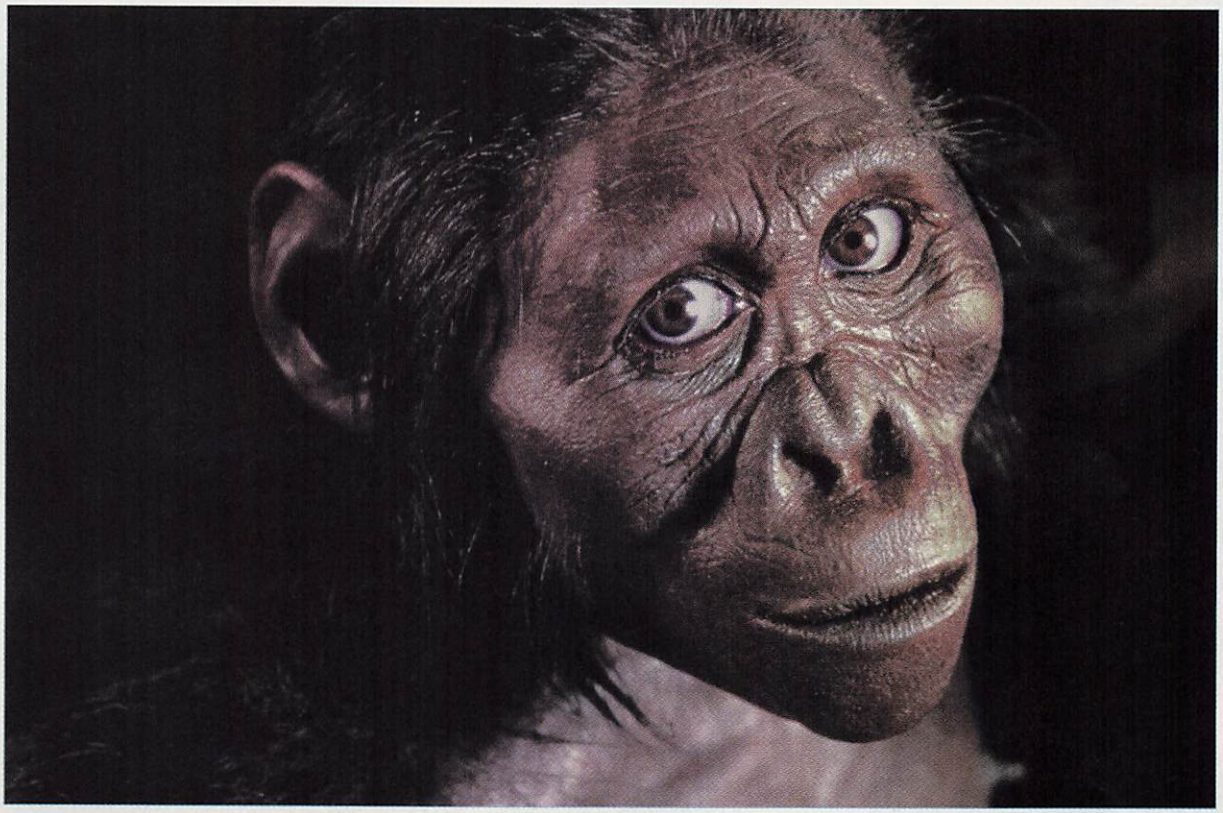
People, Places, and Trends on the Net >>> Edited by Ron Bel Bruno

AUGUST 2001



THE WEB LOVES LUCY

Meet one of your oldest, and most celebrated, relatives. Among the earliest human ancestors on record, Lucy (whose reconstructed likeness appears above) was discovered during a historic 1974 dig in Ethiopia by paleoanthropologist Donald C. Johanson. Though we do know how she got her name—the Beatles' "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds" squawked incessantly from the camp's tape recorder as Johanson examined the fossil—we've known shockingly little about her private life. But now Johanson has narrated **Becoming Human [becominghuman.org]**, a view-anytime multimedia documentary that dishes dirt on the milestones of evolution. When did nudity fall out of vogue? Who lit the first fire? Browse the segments, sponsored by the Institute of Human Origins, as you would a book, clicking on such topics as Walking Tall and the Quest for Fire. Or kick back and watch the entire 30-minute show (it's commercial-free, just like PBS). **MEAGHAN O'NEILL**

36 ARMENIAN AGIT-ROCKERS **SYSTEM OF A DOWN** UNVEIL A REDESIGNED WEB ADDRESS—AND THEIR POLITICAL AGENDA

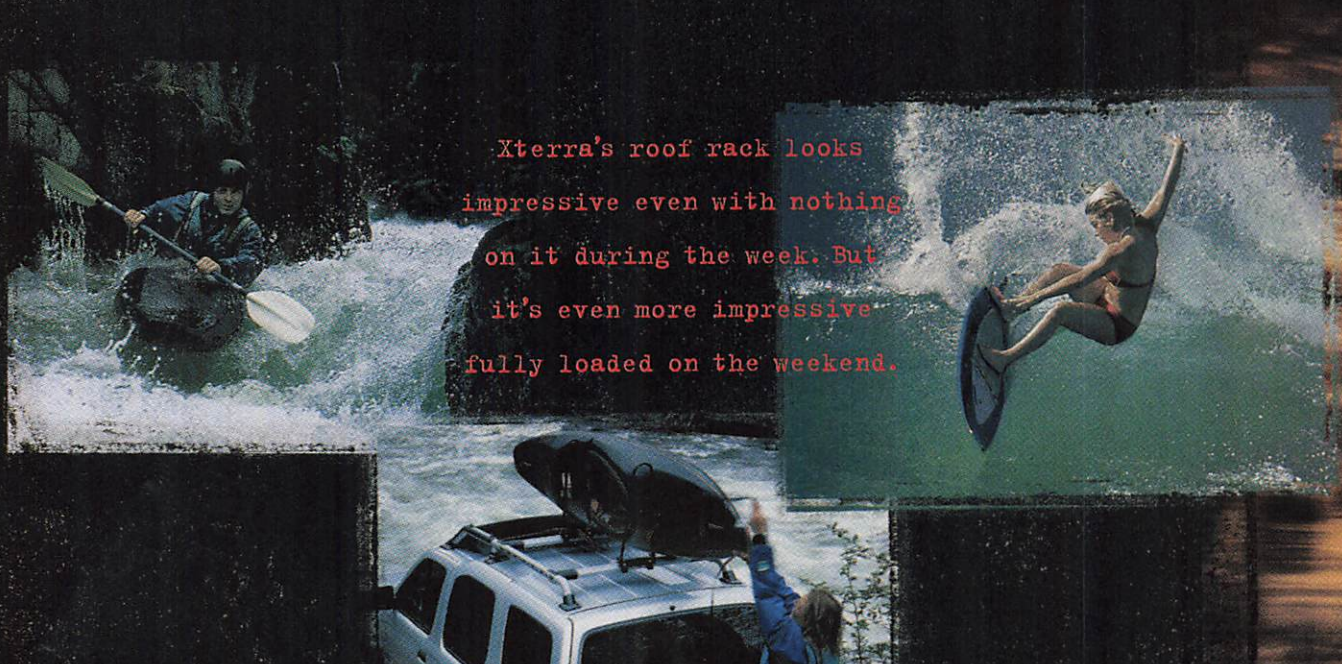
38 **TANGLED UP IN CABLES?** THE HOME & OFFICE GURU HELPS YOU SORT OUT THAT MESS OF COPPER BEHIND THE ARMOIRE

44 **THE BEST WAY TO PAY.** OUR SHOPPING EXPERT REPORTS ON THE E-CASH EXPLOSION AND SIZES UP THE SERVICES

FIND MORE CLICK! FAVORITE SITES AT YIL.COM/CLICK

JOHN GURCHE

48 HOURS AND TICK-ING.



Xterra's roof rack looks impressive even with nothing on it during the week. But it's even more impressive fully loaded on the weekend.

NISSAN

DRIVEN.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON. 5 P.M. THE COUNTDOWN BEGINS. BIKING? HIKING? SNOWBOARDING? MORE INTO A SATURDAY AND SUNDAY THAN YOU THOUGHT HUMANLY POSSIBLE. SO NOTHING WILL STOP

Xterra SE 4X4 model shown with optional equipment. Nissan, the Nissan Logo, DRIVEN and Nissan Model Names are Nissan trademarks.

You may have to wait till Monday to repair the ding in your board. But with Xterra's first-aid kit, you can treat the ding on your arm right then and there.

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Click! around the net

Net Briefs

NAPSTER: THE AFTERLIFE

To many tune-sharing surfers, it was inevitable. But that doesn't make coping with the commercialization of **Napster [napster.com]** any easier. The former renegade site recently allied with EMI Group, AOL Time Warner Inc., RealNetworks, and Bertelsmann AG to sponsor MusicNet, an online service that will sell music from these companies' vast catalogs. Early reports forecast a basic monthly subscriber fee of $4.95 for MusicNet, which will give surfers access to the works of indie artists signed to smaller labels. A premium subscription fee would unlock the aforementioned companies' vaults. Our own attempts to download MP3s from the highly diluted Napster could offer a telling look at the future: We found only three cuts off the Net Countdown Top 20, though there were more bootlegged Dave Matthews Band tracks (traded with Matthews's blessing) and '60s TV theme songs than our fat data pipes—or afternoon meeting schedules—could accommodate.

BUT CAN THEY VIBRATE?

Bothered by ringing cell phones wherever you go? Certain female birds are actually quite enamored with the technowarbling—so much so that their fine, feathered suitors have begun courting them with learned telephonic tunes. Britain's Royal Society for the Protection of Birds reports that males of several species in the U.K. are mimicking cell-phone ringer patterns. Starlings are the principal imitators, joined in song by thrushes, blackbirds, and marsh warblers. No word yet on whether they're accruing roaming charges.

WHAT ABOUT MOM?

Never mind their legal tangles. The boisterous Bush twins enjoy high approval ratings from surfers on at least one popular Web spot. When unofficial photos of the girls were lifted from the pages of **TheFirstTwins.com**, a hub for First Sisters news and gossip, and posted on **Hot or Not? [hotornot.com]**, party girl Jenna rated an 8.4; Ivy Leaguer Barbara edged her out with a 9. Simultaneously, their dad (aka leader of the free world George W. Bush) scored a Harris Poll approval rating of 59 percent. One hopes the First Lady isn't feeling neglected amid the buzz.

GOT DAVE? DMB tracks still abound on the hobbled Napster.

DO-IT-YOURSELF VIRUS

Never mind the Anna Kournikova and J.Lo viruses. The latest flavor of "bad" to course the Net didn't use a drop of elaborate code or any crafty hacking (or marketing) techniques. Instead, a seemingly do-gooding e-mail asked recipients to remove an allegedly virus-laden file, sulfnbk.exe, and then to forward the warning. The file is actually a useful (but not crucial) Windows 98 file-management utility. Yet another reason not to take those FWDs too seriously.

FINKS CHOSE THEIR LINK

When now-defunct British Net company Eezygoodies.com decided it must downsize, it followed the cue of reality shows such as *The Weakest Link*. For two months, the dot-com's staff members convened on Friday afternoon to vote out one of their colleagues. Then each unlucky staffer was notified on Monday morning and dismissed immediately. Surprisingly, the CEO wasn't the first to go.

'If journalism is the first draft of history, then the Internet simply has provided a new means for delivering that draft far and wide very quickly'

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER TOM DASCHLE, D-S.D.

THE CLICK AROUND THE NET CLIQUE: BILGE EBIRI, MEGAN GERRITY, MEAGHAN O'NEILL, JOSH ROBERTSON, LISA RONIS. WRITE TO CLICK AT CLICK@ZIFFDAVIS.COM

DAN WINTERS

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Click! around the net

Save! Smart Moves...

NEW BIZ-NESS

At last, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers has given its okay to *.biz* Web addresses. That spells relief for companies that missed out on a *.com* designation the first time around.

BUCKS NAKED

Critics of **Naked News [nakednews.com]** who call the all-bare news show "sexist" can chill out—three male anchors now take it off, too. Guys: Keep on enjoying the naughty bits. Gals: Watch your guy squirm as you enjoy full-frontal maleness.

LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge signed a bill to let drivers in his state go *on*line instead of standing *in* line to renew driver's licenses. What used to take two hours now takes two minutes. What say we sic him on the D.C. bureaucracy next?

Delete! ...Dubious Deeds

CHARACTER E-SSASSINATION

Repcheck.com and **Snitchster.com** want you to post opinions on the moral character of your friends, family, lovers, and, of course, enemies (makes for better reading). We have met Big Brother, and he is us.

SHOW HIM THE DOOR

Yes, tasteless shilling abounds on eBay. But one auctioner's attempt to sell part of the door from the scene of New York City's tragic 1999 Amadou Diallo shooting shows how far you can go when you put your mind to being a complete jerk.

DAMN THE TORPEDOES

We're glad German Interior Minister Otto Schily dislikes foreign neo-Nazi Web sites. But now he wants to employ hackers to torpedo them with denial-of-service attacks. Watch it, Otto. Over here, we call that "censorship"—and it's a Nazi thug's best friend.

'I got her an online trading account. It was a very romantic gift'

DAVID DUCHOVNY, ON HIS LATEST PRESENT TO WIFE TÉA LEONI

Top of the Net

WEB TOPPERS

The most popular sites among Web surfers...*

1	YAHOO.COM	56.2**
2	MSN.COM	49.1
3	AOL.COM	37.9
4	MICROSOFT.COM	33.3
5	PASSPORT.COM	29.5

...and the top newcomers.

1	THEGOURMET.COM	2.1
2	ELLISISLANDRECORDS.ORG	1.9
3	INFOSPACEHOSTING.NET	1.3
4	SURFSAFARI.COM	1.2
5	SAVINGSFINDER.COM	1.2

*Unique visitors, in millions, during April
**Aggregated sites
Jupiter Media Metrix [jmm.com] measures the preferences of 60,000 Net surfers. Apparent ties are the result of rounding.

CHATS

The best-attended get-togethers at Yahoo! Chat [chat.yahoo.com].

1 **BEN AFFLECK** [5/24]
2 **GEORGE ANDERSON,** psychic [5/19]
3 **GILLIAN ANDERSON** [5/15]
4 **MYA,** singer [5/1]
5 **BRIANA BANKS,** *Penthouse* pet [5/10]

Rankings reflect May chat attendance.

PALM DOWNLOADS

The top downloads at PalmGear.com.

1 **NOAH LITE ENGLISH DICTIONARY**
2 **SILVERSCREEN,** program launcher
3 **FIREVIEWER SUITE,** minibrowser
4 **QUICKOFFICE,** editing software
5 **DATEBK4,** time manager

Rankings reflect downloads during the week ending 5/24.

FILM

The top-selling titles at Amazon.com.

1 **CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON**
2 **SEX AND THE CITY: THE COMPLETE SECOND SEASON**
3 **TRAFFIC**
4 **MISS CONGENIALITY**
5 **WHAT WOMEN WANT**

Rankings reflect May sales.

GAMES

The most popular demos at HappyPuppy.com.

1 **LINEAGE THE BLOODPLEDGE**
2 **BEACH HEAD 2000**
3 **WARCRAFT III**
4 **GRAND THEFT AUTO 2**
5 **CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING**

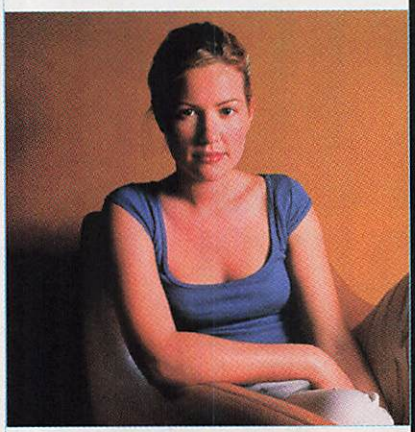
Rankings reflect traffic for the week ending 5/25.

netobsessions

The Girl

DIDO

It took Eminem's sample of her poignant "Thank You" to push this U.K. vocalist into the U.S. spotlight. Get acquainted @ **Dido: A Fan Site [geocities.com/dido_afansite]**



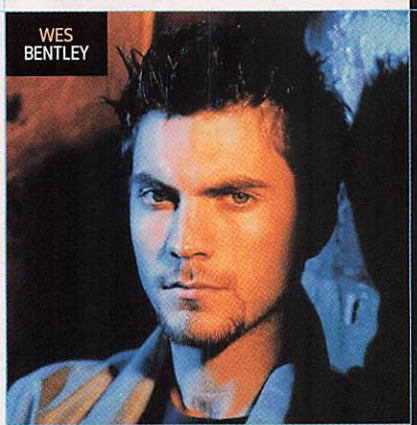
The Thing

PREPPY MADNESS

It's a fact: Naked people sell clothes. What a surprise that the skinny-dipping boys and girls of the Abercrombie & Fitch catalog now have a cult following, including fans at 36 Yahoo! clubs. Start @ **The Carlson Twins [clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/thecarlsontwins]**

The Guy

WES BENTLEY



The *American Beauty* alum tries out horror in *Soul Survivors,* racking up fan pages and clubs online. Start @ **The Wes Bentley Website [clearillusions.com/wesbentley]**

DIDO: KEVIN KNIGHT/CORBIS OUTLINE; BENTLEY: LANCE STAEDLER

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UP WITH THE SYSTEM

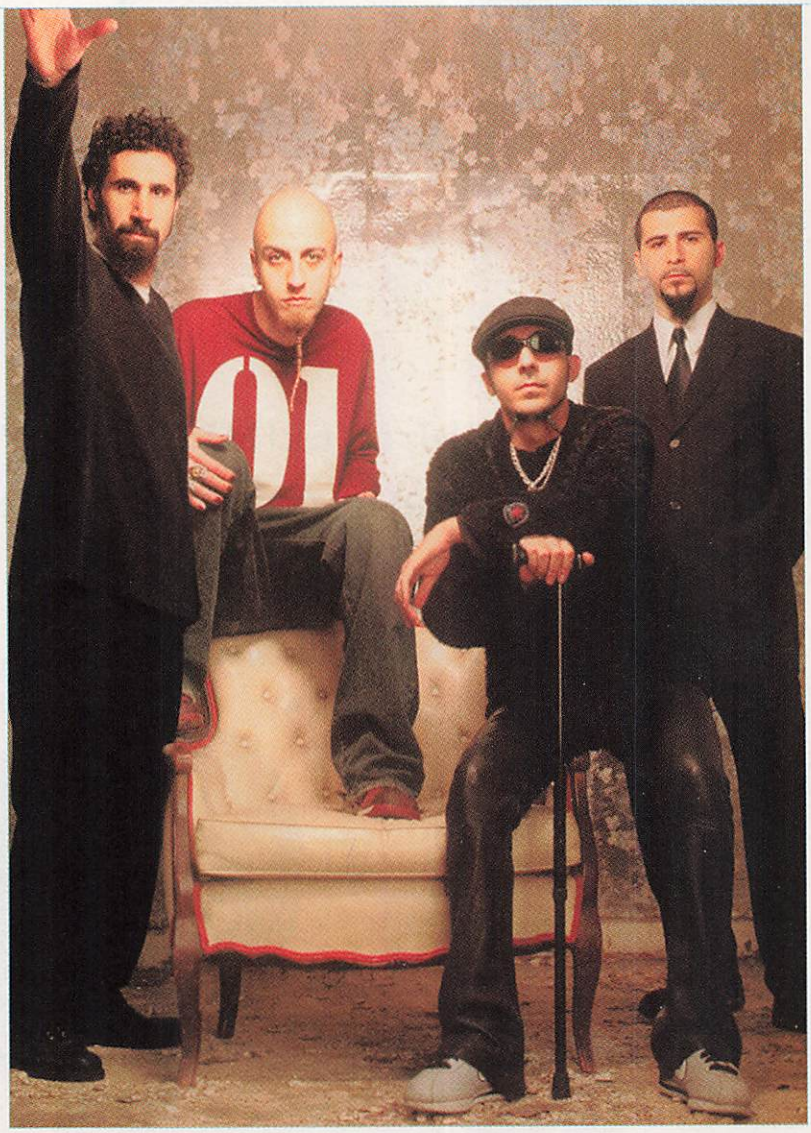
A RISING RAP-METAL BAND'S WEB RELAUNCH ADDS POLITICS TO THE MIX

"There's a lot U.S. television doesn't want or care to show you," says Shavo Odadjian (second from left), bassist for agit-rock band System of a Down. The members' vested interest in world politics has spurred this L.A.-based Armenian-American group, whose upcoming album is due out soon, to serve up a heavy dose of news and opinion within the pages of its relaunched site **[systemofadown.com]**.

Amid photos and tour info, the site hosts news and views on the Armenian genocide of the early 20th century, free-trade debates, and the climate treaty, to name a few issues on its radar.

Band members cite lead singer Serj Tankian (left) as their chief tech wizard and resident Net zealot. And the Web pages he's helped to create reflect the members' personae. "We're very four-dimensional, if you will," Odadjian says. "So I thought, *Why shouldn't each section have a different vibe?*" The band's "dimensions" include guitarist Daron Malakian (second from right) and drummer John Dolmayan (right).

The site is indeed a study in peaceful cohabitation: A newsy front page and a map-themed Global Issues section complement the Cult section, which posts fan photos and letters (and whose icon is a bloody, revolving head). Yes, political passions notwithstanding, it's easy to see that the members of System of a Down are head bangers at heart. **BILGE EBIRI**



ROBERT SEBREE

'We're very four-dimensional, if you will. So I thought, *Why shouldn't each section have a different vibe?*'

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LET THE NET DO IT BETTER

SAVE TIME

HOUSE CALLS

WHO CAN BUILD A KITCHEN? THE HANDYMAN CAN

Why does the Home Depot get more crowded during an economic slump? Because people are staying home, and since they're spending time staring at their walls, they get motivated to improve their surroundings. Some will go it alone, but the toolbox-impaired will seek out professional help before daring to knock down a wall or measure for floorboards. When you're looking for a contractor, handyman, or home construction specialist, word of mouth works best. But when no good leads are forthcoming, turn to the Net to do some research. These sites get you started on your quest for the right home-improvement helpers. Use them to see who's available in your area, to find out who's certified, and, in some cases, to get an estimate without a lot of phone tag and missed appointments. Then just stand back and let the demolition begin. **DON WILLMOTT**

SITE	SERVICES COVERED	BEST LISTINGS	FREE ESTIMATES?	OTHER FEATURES
BUILD.COM (WWW.BUILD.COM)	Contracting, real estate, financing, insurance, interior design, more	Contractors, appliance and fixture manufacturers, online stores	No	Links to resources for home-related services in 12 categories
HANDYMAN ONLINE (HANDYMAN ONLINE.COM)	Remodeling, painting, plumbing, electrical, landscaping, more	Cabinetry, flooring, painting, outdoor work	Yes	Tutorials on seasonal maintenance and working with contractors
IMPROVENET (IMPROVENET.COM)	Architecture, contracting, financing	General contractors and experts in 46 subcategories	Yes	Estimator tools to help you price a project
SERVICEMAGIC (SERVICEMAGIC.COM)	Architecture, contracting, household maintenance and repairs, more	Architects, kitchen remodelers, experts in 20 subcategories	No	Resource Center for design ideas, planning, and troubleshooting

netsavers

Hook It Up

SAVE TIME

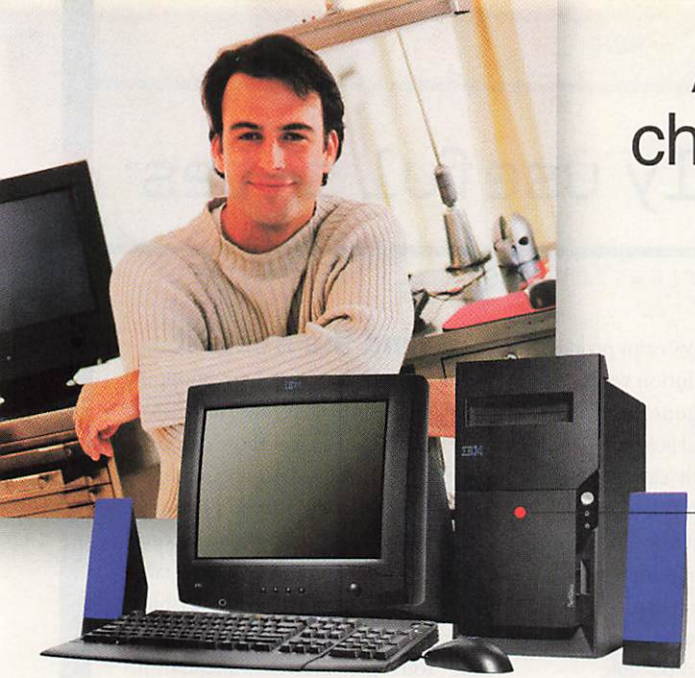
Buy a DVD player, bring it home, open the box, and...um, now what? Look at all those inputs, outputs, and cables. On the back of the TV there's more of the same, and if you want to take the leap into the world of home theater and add three or five additional speakers, you're really going to be flummoxed. Sure, you could hire the president of your local high school's AV club to help you out, but you could also consult online retailer **HiFi.com**, which features a series of crystal-clear, color-coded setup guides to walk you through the process of configuring your home entertainment system, no matter how many racks of complicated equipment you may have. Study the guides carefully, and you'll have to make only one trip, rather than two or three, to RadioShack to buy the extra cables you need. **D.W.**

Today's Best Jobs

SAVE TIME

Maybe you've chosen the right career path, but maybe you haven't. Economic and demographic shifts can turn today's paralegal into tomorrow's fry cook. There are all sorts of online resources that help you reevaluate your professional life, but one of the fastest ways to find out if you're on the right track is to consult the Department of Labor's brutally frank **Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook [stats.bls.gov/ocohome.html]**. Updated every two years, it provides detailed reports on hundreds of occupations, describing what the job entails, typical working conditions, salary range, and, most important, the outlook from now until 2008. (See this issue's Web Lab to learn more about job sites). **D.W.**

SINK: RALF TURANDER/PHOTONICA; DVDS: SPARKY/GETTYONE



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[1]Pricing shown is price available from IBM directly; reseller prices may vary. IBM price does not include tax or shipping and is subject to change without notice. Price of $899 applies to IBM NetVista A21i Part #2257G0U, 15" monitor Part #24P4555, Microsoft Picture It! Part #22P5360, IBM Office Professional 280 UPS Part #10K1910 and UMAX Astra 3400 Scanner Part #22P6080 only. [2]Requires separate Internet access account. [3]The "Buy Today, Ship Today" program applies to select IBM products only (designated on the IBM Web site at *www.pc.ibm.com/us/offers/buytoday*); it does not apply to non-listed systems, accessories, options or other products. Orders under the program must be placed by phone at 1 888 ShopIBM or via the Web at *ibm.com/shop* Orders under the program must be properly completed by 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Orders completed after 3:00 p.m. or on weekends ship the next business day. An order is considered properly completed when IBM has approved the customer's method of payment, including any necessary credit authorizations. Orders subject to product availability, and will be held until all parts are ready to ship. Delivery date and costs will vary depending on delivery method chosen. Shipments may be delayed due to business closings or delays based on the weather or other circumstances beyond our control. IBM reserves the right to modify or withdraw this offer at any time, without notice. [4]MHz/GHz only measures microprocessor internal clock speed; many factors affect application performance. [5]System includes chipset that uses some main memory for the video subsystem. The amount used will vary depending on video mode and may be as much as 8MB. Thus, accessible system memory is less than the amount stated. [6]GB equals one billion bytes when referring to storage capacity; accessible capacity may be less. [7]CD-RW, DVD-ROM and CD-ROM drives list a variable read rate. CD-RW write and re-write speeds vary and list only the maximum possible. Actual CD-RW, DVD-ROM and CD-ROM speeds will vary and are often less than the maximum possible. The read and write results of the CD-RW drive depend on the quality and characteristics of the CD-R and CD-RW media used. Poor results may be obtained with some media suppliers. [8]Designed to be capable of receiving at up to 56Kbps with compatible phone line and server equipment, and transmitting at up to 31.2Kbps. Public networks currently limit maximum download speeds to about 53Kbps. Actual speeds depend on many factors and are often less than the maximum possible. [9]Some software may differ from its retail version (if available), and may not include user manuals or all program functionality. For non-IBM software, applicable third-party licenses may apply. Warranty, service and support for non-IBM products, if any, are provided by third parties, not IBM. IBM makes no representations or warranties regarding non-IBM products. [10]For terms and conditions or copies of IBM's Statement of Limited Warranty, call 1 800 772-2227 in the US and in Canada call 1 800 426-2255. Telephone support may be subject to additional charges. For warranties including onsite labor, customer may be asked certain diagnostic questions before a technician is sent. [11]This product is manufactured for and distributed and sold by Tripp Lite. IBM, the IBM logo and IBM trade dress are owned by International Business Machines Corporation and are used under license from IBM. IBM does not manufacture this product and provides no warranty or support for this product. Please contact Tripp Lite with any questions/comments and warranty, service or support requests related to this product. IBM reserves the right to alter product offerings and specifications at any time, without notice. IBM cannot be responsible for photographic or typographic errors. All IBM product names are registered trademarks or trademarks of International Business Machines Corporation. Lotus and SmartSuite are registered trademarks of Lotus Development Corporation, an IBM company. Intel and the Intel Inside logo are registered trademarks and Celeron is a trademark of Intel Corporation. Microsoft, Picture It! and Windows are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation. Other company, product and service names may be trademarks or service marks of others. ©2001 IBM Corp. All rights reserved.

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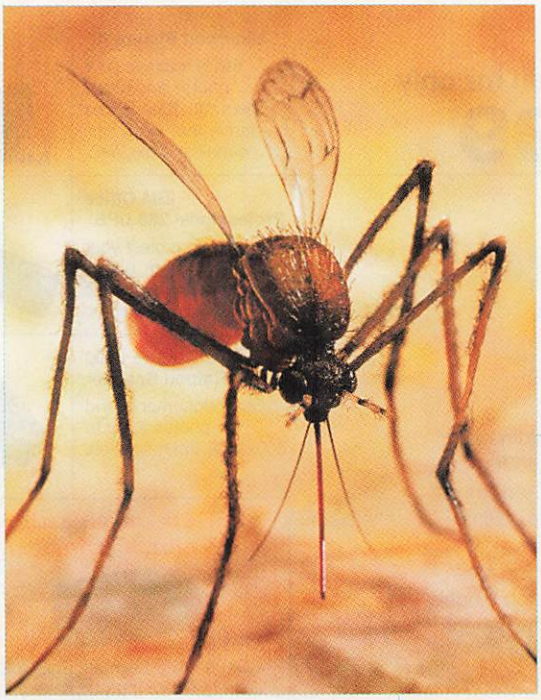
THIS MONTH'S MOST PRACTICAL DESTINATIONS BY RICHARD BUTNER



Avoid Mosquito Bites

Ah, the joys of summer: time for cookouts, baseball, and bug bites. Before you get tired of being an hors d'oeuvre, browse to **Skeeterbites.com**, a service of the Cutter insect repellent people. Enter your ZIP code to get a three-week mosquito forecast for your area, with recommendations for the right amount of repellent to use in every situation. Explore further for some take-no-prisoners skeeter defense tips, including exhortations to remove old tree stumps and refresh birdbath water. Whatever it takes!

Stop Polluting

Heat waves, floods, freakish storms—the experts tell us to blame carbon emissions for these symptoms of the greenhouse effect. Reduce your own by using the **AirHead: Emissions Calculator [airhead.org/Calculator]**. Answer nine questions about your power bills and your lifestyle to find out how many pounds of air pollution you personally generated last month and how you compare with the average American. Then use the search area to see the emissions ratings for a variety of products so you can make your home and life as green as possible.

Uncover Hoaxes

Great...yet another e-mail petition lies in your in-box, lamenting the imminent demise of public radio or offering you a free Disney World trip. Is it legit this time? Find out at **Purportal.com**. The site links to the top hoax and urban legend databases, making it a great place to point your friends who keep sending you those supremely annoying "THEY'RE GONNA TAX YOUR E-MAIL!" messages. Also take a look at the many links on spam, fraud, and suspicious multilevel marketing schemes, as well as instructions on crafting a good non-hoax e-mail action alert.

Tune Up on Time

When was your used car's oil last changed? If you had signed up at **Ownersite [ownersite.com]**, you'd know for sure. Register to track up to two vehicles for free, getting e-mail reminders that tell you when it's time to service your car. You can also maintain a detailed history, down to fuel usage and parts purchases. If you want to keep all of your car info in one place, store your insurance- and warranty-related information and trip logs here, too.

Find the Best Fit

Some people don't need any shopping help; just point them toward the store and watch them go. For those of us who need some friendly advice about the best looks for our oddly shaped physiques, there's **TheRightSize [therightsize.com]**. Register for free and answer some detailed questions about items of clothing (shirts/blouses, pants, outerwear) you own and like. You'll get back recommendations for items with similar fits that you might want to check out, either by shopping online or by heading to the mall.

Get Traffic Court Help

Say it with innocence this time: "Hi, officer. Does there seem to be a problem?" If you live in, say, Maine, but get busted by a speed trap in, uh, Miami (yeah, that's the ticket), you may want to track down a Floridian traffic lawyer at **Traffic-Ticket.com**. A little local knowledge can help the wheels of justice turn more smoothly. Search by state and county to locate lawyers specializing in traffic cases. The site includes pointers to information on speeding regulations and auto insurance regulations by state or Canadian province.

SEND US NEWS OF YOUR USEFUL FIND! WRITE TO IUS@ZIFFDAVIS.COM

MOSQUITO: WILL CROCKER/GETTYONE; SPEED LIMIT SIGN: EASTCOTT/MOMATIUK/GETTYONE

Live Like Hef

There's a subtle difference—but a difference nonetheless—between a dry martini and an extra-dry martini, and **The Playboy Advisor [playboyadvisor.com]** knows where to draw that line. No matter how smooth an operator you are, get smoother here. If you have a question, problem, or predicament, send in your query, or search the Q&A by keyword to find out how to stop CDs from skipping, when to add cuffs to suit trousers, how to test-drive a car, and—oh, yeah—how to improve your love life in all sorts of creative ways.

Motivate Yourself

You bound out of bed each morning, skip to the shower, consult your to-do list, and attack your day. Or maybe you don't. Those who need a little motivation to get up and go can get pointers at **Ihavegoals.com**. It's a commercial site, selling advice from coaches and a "life goals" database, but you'll find free content here, too: a success tip of the day, a coaching question of the week, and quizzes to determine whether you're goal-oriented, balanced, and organized. Step No. 1: Get up off that couch and turn on your computer.

Learn While You Travel

The lie-on-a-beach-and-sip-a-mai-tai vacation is fine for some, but just too leisurely for others. Why not learn a skill during your time off? Try the extensive listings at **ShawGuides [shawguides.com]**, an index of more than 4,300 learning vacations and retreats covering a wide range of interests. Here you'll find everything from writers' workshops to cooking schools and cultural-travel tours of all types. Intensive language-study tours cover everything from Italian to Finnish to Thai. Select your topic and then get specific by location, date, or focus to find the package that's right for you.

Skip Bad Flicks

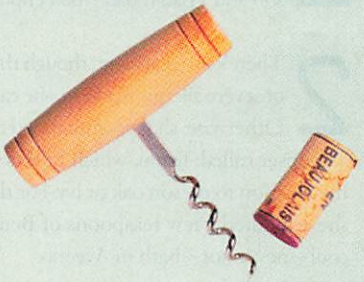
Don't spend your hard-earned bucks on cinematic duds. Check the incredibly detailed **Metacritic [metacritic.com]**. It goes a step beyond competitors such as MRQE and Check the Grid by scouring reviews from big-name pubs including *Rolling Stone* and *The New York Times*, normalizing each reviewer's ratings to a 10-point scale, and then combining all the scores into one "metascore." Search for a particular first-run feature or video (CDs are covered, too), or pick the most popular choices off the front page. In either case, you'll get links to each individual review (they're displayed in order from most positive to most negative). And yes, our own Roger Ebert is included among the critics.

WOMAN: TONY GARCIA/GETTYONE; *BATTLEFIELD EARTH*: FOTO FANTASIES

...and downloads

ENJOY YOUR WINE CELLAR

If your wine collection is mostly American, **The Uncorked Cellar [uncork.com.au]** is a good way to keep track of it and learn more about it. The database includes all the necessary fields, covers 9,000 American and Australian wines, and has addresses for over 4,100 wineries. You'll also have access to winemakers' notes (there's space to add your own tasting notes, too), maps, value estimates, and plenty of info on when to drink what. *Free to try for 60 days; $30 to buy.*



TRACK HURRICANES

It's that time of year again. The Atlantic storm season is about to commence, so as Dan Rather dons his yellow slicker and heads for a storm-ravaged North Carolina beach, it's a good time for weather watchers to download **Hurricane Watch 2001 [members.aol.com/jgraff/hcane.html]**. Use this tool to map all Atlantic storm tracks from 1950 through 2000 on a good-looking zoom-able globe, compare the patterns with the weather system currently heading for your local coastline, and calculate the storm's bearing and ETA. *Free to try for 30 days; $15 to buy ($20 if you order the disk).*

LEAF THROUGH SCREENS

Forget Web pages—how about *real* pages? **FlipBrowser [flipbrowser.com]** from E-Book Systems takes you back to the future. This browser add-on presents Web-based data as an on-screen booklet or catalog; you literally turn the pages with your mouse. It's a format that makes sense for content providers who want to position ads next to articles, real estate agents who want to show off houses, and photographers who want to create fun photo albums. *FlipBrowser, free; FlipBrowser Gold, $14.95.*

COMPARING THE TRIED-AND-TRUE WITH THE NET-AND-NEW BY DAVID SHEFF

TREATING POISON OAK

OLD WAY

1 *Ouch.* There's a high price to pay for careless hiking around these parts. Poison oak, like poison ivy, can be brutal. My son and I had it bad—bad enough to head to the doctor.

2 There's no treatment, though the doctor said that in cases of severe allergic reaction, she can give a shot of cortisone. Otherwise, she recommended taking a cool shower with a cleanser called Tecnu, which breaks down the oil that causes the reaction to poison oak or ivy. For the itchiness and swelling, she suggested a few teaspoons of Benadryl taken orally, and a cool—never hot—bath in Aveeno.

TIME ELAPSED 48 minutes in the doctor's office, plus a series of Tecnu showers and Aveeno soaks

COMMENTS It's best to recognize the distinctive look of the poison-oak plant and avoid it in the first place.

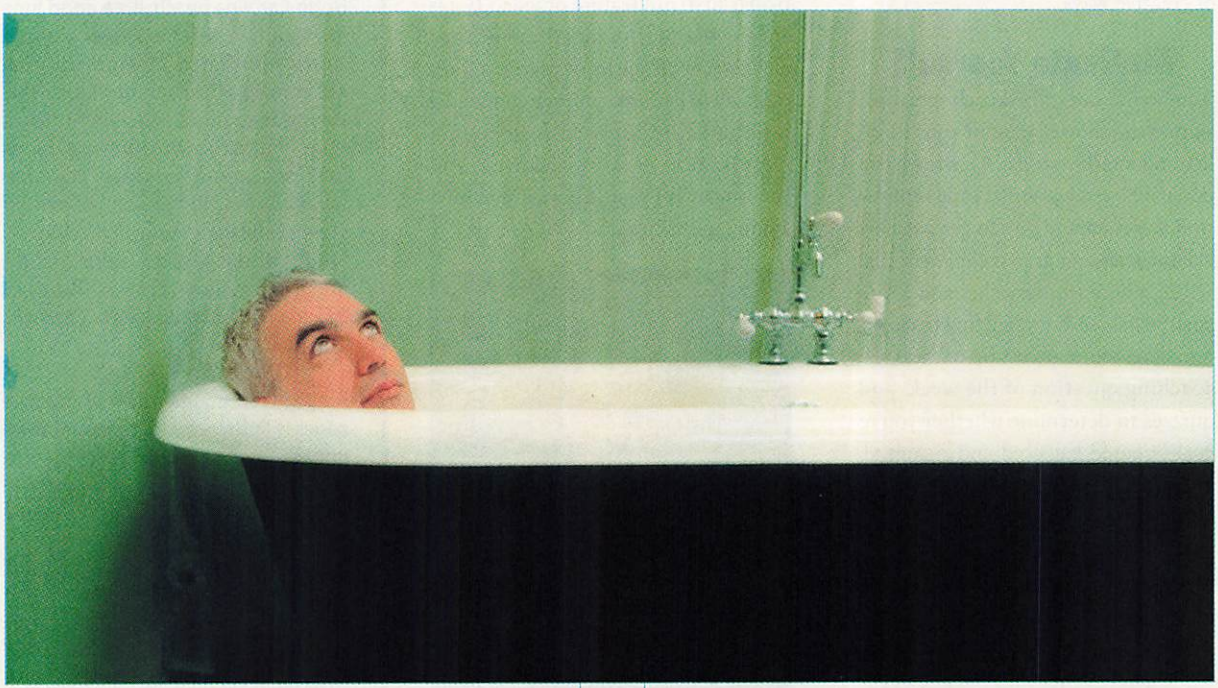
NET WAY

1 As expected, every type of treatment imaginable is featured on the Net. **GORP [gorp.com]** notes: "If you do nothing, it'll heal in two weeks. If you try all these over-the-counter and/or natural remedies, wait 14 days. If you go to the doctor for serious mind-altering steroids, it's gone within a day."

2 Contrary to our doctor's advice, several sites, including Andrew Weil's **Ask Dr. Weil [drweil.com]**, specify hot water. (Dr. Weil also recommends Tecnu.) Dr. Nancy Snyderman, writing on **Drkoop.com**, suggests prescription steroid cream, which may make the rash disappear sooner.

TIME ELAPSED 40 minutes surfing

COMMENTS We were so miserable, we were desperate enough to try everything.



EDEN ROBBINS; CLOTHING: KENNETHCOLE.COM

WINNER: TIE **We tried a potpourri of the above remedies, and things got better in several days.**

BUYING AND INSTALLING TIRES

OLD WAY

1 Visited the tire departments at Sears and Costco, as well as Cain's Tire, a local shop. Salespeople at all three stores recommended the Michelin MX4 as a good all-weather tire.

2 The local shop and Costco had the best prices: $360 for four tires, including tax, balancing, and installation.

TIME ELAPSED 4 hours shopping

COMMENTS I want the best tires available.

NET WAY

1 The Net has a disadvantage when it comes to tires: no balancing, installation, etc. At **Tirerack.com** there's a search engine for "recommended" installers around the country, and in many cases tires bought online can be shipped directly to the installer. However, installation adds $10 to $18 per tire.

2 I searched the Net and found that the prices weren't much better than at the local stores. The best online prices were about $10 per tire cheaper than Costco or Cain's—without tax, balancing, or installation.

3 There were useful tire-related online tools, however, including **Edmunds.com: Tires: Traffic Safety Tips [edmunds.com/ownership/maintenance/articles/43815/article.html]**, and my well-used account at **Consumer Reports Online [www.consumerreports.org]**, where I double-checked the safety of the MX4.

TIME ELAPSED 47 minutes online

COMMENTS The Net is a great help researching tires, but buying the Old Way is best. The exception: If you live in a remote area without discount tire shops, buying online and using a local installer might make sense.

WINNER: OLD WAY **I bought the tires at Cain's, which offered free rotation and other services.**

RESEARCHING A ROCK BAND

OLD WAY

1 It dates me to say that a friend and I made a bet about the original members of Procol Harum, our favorite band. We agreed that the founding genius was Gary Brooker, but I thought Robin Trower was the original guitarist. My friend disagreed.

2 To settle the bet, we called a third friend. He said, "Who cares?" We called a local record store, too. The clerk looked it up for us and said that Trower was the guitarist on some PH albums, but not all.

TIME ELAPSED 30 minutes on the phone

COMMENTS Irrelevant disagreements such as this have been known to destroy friendships. We *had* to find the answer.

NET WAY

1 My friend still wasn't ready to concede, so we went online to find some impressive Procol Harum sites, including **Procol Harum: Beyond the Pale [procolharum.com]** and **Procol Harum: All This and More [geocities.com/Area51/2202/procol/procol.html]**. The latter noted that Trower was indeed with the band on the first album, but my friend still wouldn't admit that I was right. At Beyond the Pale, however, we found out that Brooker and Trower were together in another band before they formed Procol Harum. I won a beer. No, it wasn't a whiter shade of ale.

TIME ELAPSED 17 minutes

COMMENTS The Net is awesome when it proves you right.

WINNER: NET WAY **For the definitive answer, the Net didn't let us down.**

The browser

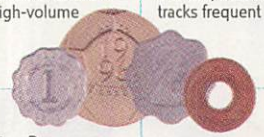
A SMART ALTERNATIVE TO USING CREDIT CARDS ONLINE TAKES HOLD...AND IT'S ABOUT TIME

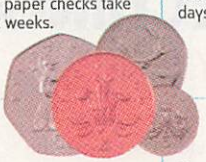
In the quest for a safe online payment option, consumers have been wooed with everything from flooz and beenz to one-shot credit cards. But it took eBay users' need for quick, reliable transactions to push e-payments to the fore, and PayPal and Billpoint may, at least, be emerging as standards—most noticeably on eBay.

Electronic payment systems let users transfer money from one account to another with nothing to send but an e-mail. Settle a dinner tab, pay for an auction item, or even take care of rent. As long as both recipient and sender are enrolled, with e-mail addresses and credit card or checking account information on file, they're set. So take a look to determine which one best suits your needs. **AMANDA MYERS**

E-Payments: Cash with Cachet

	PayPal (paypal.com)	Billpoint (billpoint.com)	Western Union MoneyZap (moneyzap.com)
WHAT IT IS	The most popular e-payment site. Pay people in 39 countries from your PC or Web-enabled mobile phone.	Custom-made for eBayers. Pay people in 40 countries; merchant accounts available to high-volume sellers.	For auctiongoers and civilians alike. Pay people in the U.S.; address book tracks frequent payees.
USE IT TO PAY...	Anyone with an e-mail address.	Geared to eBay users, though it also handles person-to-person and person-to-business transactions if sender is a registered eBay seller.	Friends, auctioners, employees, participating merchants.
FEES*	30¢ plus up to 2.2 percent of the total.	35¢ plus up to 2.5 percent of the total. There's also a 0.5 percent deposit fee.	35¢ plus a fee ranging from 1.75 percent to 2.8 percent. There's a 50¢ minumum.
GETTING YOUR CASH**	Takes 3 to 4 business days; paper checks take 1 to 2 weeks.	Takes up to 3 business days; no paper checks.	Takes 2 to 4 business days; no paper checks.
WHAT WE FOUND	It's easy to use and fast, though the site won't mail checks to a P.O. box.	Simple navigation and efficient service all around, though it should lose the intricate fee structure.*	No problem using it, but it still had not released our funds 5 days after authorization. Well, there go those weekend plans.





*See site for details on specific fee structures. All sites offer free sending services.
**The time it takes for the service to process withdrawals from your digital account to your checking account.

Tools

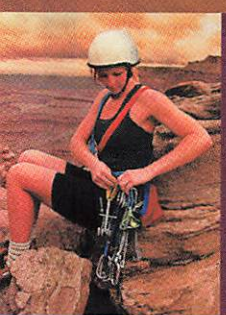
While it's easy to order online, keeping track of purchases remains a challenge for rabid shoppers. **MaxManager [maxmanager.com]** not only saves e-receipts, it also gives users such extras as order tracking, sale notification, and password retention. Best of all, the free service stores receipts for up to three years, so you're ready if the tax man comes to call.

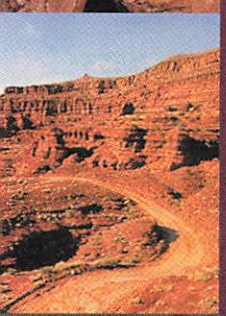
I can buy what...?

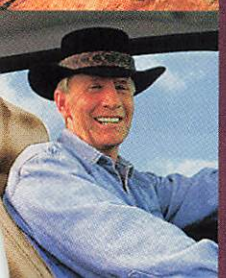
Long for the days of cross-country train trips trading witty repartee with that mystery dame in the third car? Take a gander at **eLuxury [eluxury.com]**. Its Louis Vuitton wardrobe features shoe space, garment hangers, and a price tag of $18,650. Repartee not included.

COINS: KERAMA/PHOTONICA

OUTBACK®







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e-venger

CRUSADING FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND THE INTERNET WAY BY LAURA FISHER KAISER

IT'S ALL RELATIVE

Q I signed up for a software download from **OnlineDetective.com**. I understood that the first 30 days of service were free, after which I would be charged $29.95 per month. However, once I was granted access—after entering my billing information—I found the site unsatisfactory for finding long-lost relatives, which is what I had planned to do. I canceled my account the same day and then checked my online bank records. I was surprised that I had already been billed $29.95! I called **iBill: Internet Billing Company [ibillcs.com]**, which was listed on my statement, and the rep said to e-mail OnlineDetective directly. I did so, and have not received a direct answer or a credit as of now.

ERIN FEDERMAN
Covington, Kentucky

A We're always suspicious of sites that practically require an online detective just to find out anything about the product or the people behind it. OnlineDetective's FAQ section contains only two pieces of information, both pertaining to registration passwords. No address or phone numbers. No jolly About Us page. We sent an e-mail to admin@onlinedetective.com and, to the site's credit, spokesman Jeff VanDyne called us back within 10 minutes. (It never hurts to mention that 1.3 million readers are awaiting an answer.) Anyway, he insisted that although the company allows a "free preview" (a home page with inactive pull-down menus), there is no 30-day free trial. He pointed out that the site's Help section states that "once you decide to activate your software and become a member, your preview period is over and the charges begin" and then you're billed every 30 days. "For her to have misunderstood the terms means she didn't read them," he said. "We explain exactly what a free preview involves."

Ergo, no refund.

Undaunted, we sent him a copy of your receipt from iBill that specifies "Length of Subscription: 30-Day Trial Period" and that your credit card would not be billed for four weeks. Well! VanDyne then told us he was "completely unaware of the language being used by iBill when sending notices to our clients....The message clearly communicated a far different message than we at OnlineDetective communicate directly to our customers, and therefore we have reversed the charges for this transaction."

If you're still looking for relatives, start with **Search Systems [pac-info.com]**, which provides links to 4,372 free databases as a public service by Pacific Information Resources, Inc. You'll find all kinds of sites on adoption, alumni, the armed forces, and the like that might be of use in tracking down people worldwide.

Finally, although we didn't look at the "63,000 databases and resources" to which OnlineDetective promises access, we suspect you might be able to accomplish as much—gratis—by using a good search site such as **Google [google.com]** or **Vivisimo [vivisimo.com]**.

'We're always suspicious of sites that practically require an online detective just to find out anything about the product'
THE E-VENGER

MY COMPUTER IS M.I.A.

Q I purchased a MicronPC 1 GHz AMD Enhanced Athlon Package from online retailer Video Computer Store for $1,897. The system never arrived. I've e-mailed the company several times, but all I get are form letters saying they'll get back to me within 96 hours. I paid by Visa.

CORY KATHOL
South Sioux City, Nebraska

A Take a number and get in line—along with the other irate customers who have filed complaints against VCS with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Consumer Protection. The company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in March and is being sued by Pennsylvania Attorney General Mike Fisher for allegedly failing to deliver thousands of computer systems.

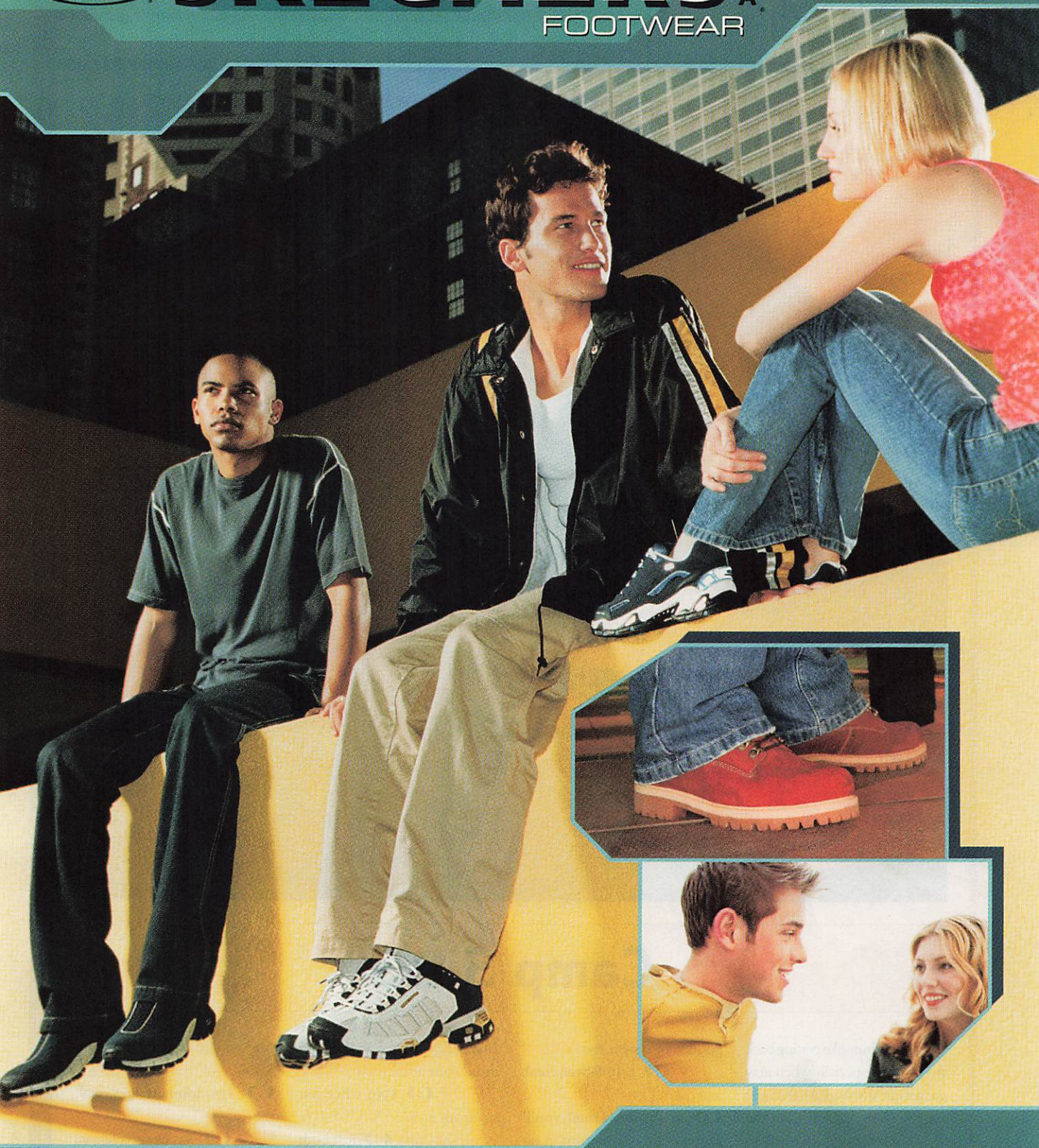
You need to file a claim with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court at 900 Market Street, 4th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19107. The case is Bankruptcy No. 01-14231-DWS. While you're at it, file a complaint with the Bureau of Consumer Protection (nationwide: 215-560-2414; within Pennsylvania only: 800-441-2555; or **[www.attorneygeneral.gov/ppd/bcp/compform_vcs/bcpform_vcs.cfm]**). Make sure you write a letter to your Visa carrier and dispute the charge—and do so right away, as there may be a time limit.

Victim of an online transaction gone awry? Ask E-venger for help at www.yil.com/evenger.

AVOID A MESSAGE BOARD MESS

Beware transactions via Usenet groups, which are not secured for doing business. If you're defrauded, there's little recourse. If a company doesn't have a bona fide URL and secure Web site, it's best to move on.

SKECHERS USA
FOOTWEAR



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FOR A FREE CATALOG CALL: 1.800.201.4659

Camp Sites

There's nothing like getting back to nature—especially when new gadgets are involved. After scouring the Web for gear (and the weather forecast), get ready to navigate the great outdoors. With the world's smallest global positioning system, the **GARMIN ETREX ‹1›**, $139 **[llbean.com]**, and **LEICA 12x50 BINOCULARS ‹2›**, $1,495 **[orvis.com]**, you'll scope out a destination in no time. But you work hard, so skip the hiking and climbing. Instead, just gaze at the cosmos from a **NIGHTWATCH 2 CD TENT ‹3›**, $339, while you sip from a **WATERSLIDE HYDRATION PACK ‹4›**, $75, both from **[easternmountainsports.com]**. And although there's no tiny television hidden in the **SAM JAM SLEEPING BAG ‹5›**, $579 **[sierradesigns.com]**, the **REMOTE CONTROL LANTERN ‹6›**, $35 **[www.coleman.com]**, should satisfy your trigger finger. **MEAGHAN O'NEILL**

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRIAN HAGIWARA

STYLED BY VICKY McGARRY

SONY

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SEE JACK RUN.

SEE JACK RUN WHILE YOU'RE ON THE REDEYE BACK TO NEW YORK.

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Memory Stick® media stores and transfers all your data – pictures, music, video, and files.

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palm powered

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Speedo Aquanetic Junior goggles [speedo.com]; O Sole Mio sunscreen from Bambini Soul [beauty.com]; Bain de Soleil Oil-Free Faces sunscreen [drugstore.com]; Clarins sunblock stick [saksfifthavenue.com]; Coppertone sunscreen lotion [drugstore.com]

Summer's Main Squeeze

Q » My annual trip to Martha's Vineyard is all in order, thanks to Expedia.com. But I'm lost when it comes to choosing a good tanning lotion.

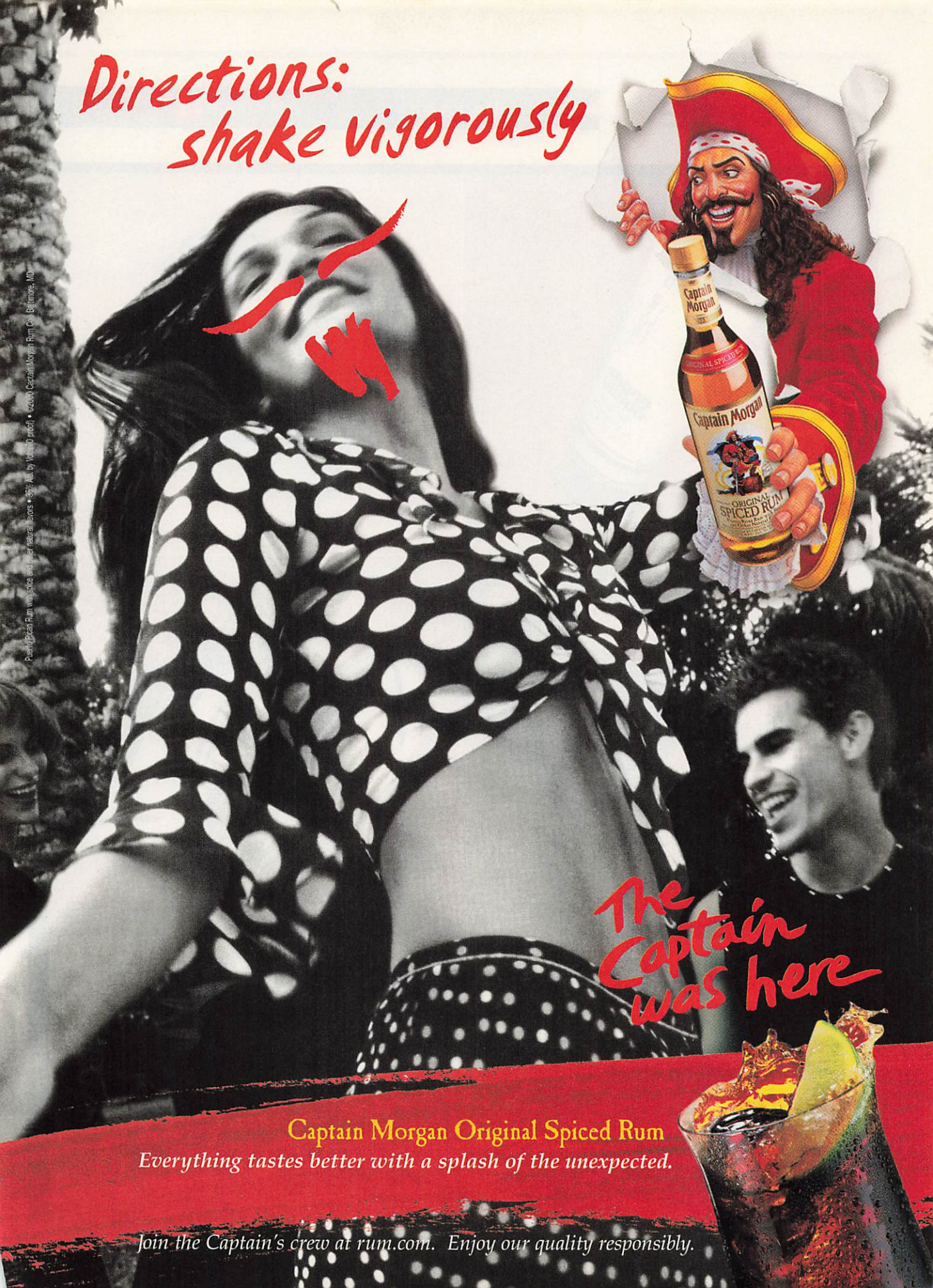
A » Hope you won't be looking for the fountain of youth at Menemsha Beach: Prolonged exposure to the sun hastens aging. You'll want balms that protect as well as help bronze. The **American Cancer Society [cancer.org]** suggests applying sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher about 20 minutes before going outside, to allow time for it to interact with your skin. Another tip: Reapply sunscreen often, especially after swimming or working out. Turn to **Drugstore.com** to find trustworthy brands such as Coppertone and Bain de Soleil. For sensitive skin, Clarins at **Saks Fifth Avenue [saksfifthavenue.com]**, Bambini Soul at **Beauty.com**, and **Lancôme [lancome.com]** are all excellent bets.

Q » I recently bought several vintage neckties on eBay. They were a great bargain, but some are outdated, and others need to be refurbished. Where can I get them spiffed up?

A » A well-crafted tie made from quality fabric in a classic pattern or color can be easily restored or modified for much less than the price of buying one new. You can have neckwear narrowed, widened, lengthened, shortened, or relined to suit your personal taste. I send mine to **Tiecrafters [tiecrafters.com]**, which with the help of FedEx makes pickups and deliveries all over the country and around the world; contact the company by phone (212-629-5800) or by e-mail (info@tiecrafters.com) to make arrangements. Tiecrafters also repairs old ties, so if that beautiful 1970s Ferragamo is a little threadbare, you can have it spruced up here.

Need style? Know someone who does? E-mail askwarren@ziffdavis.com.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES WORRELL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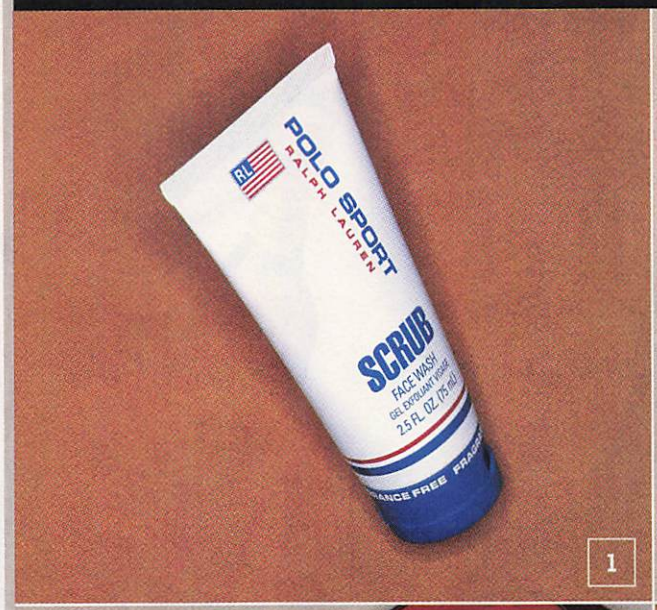


1

2

3

4

The Compleat Workout Kit

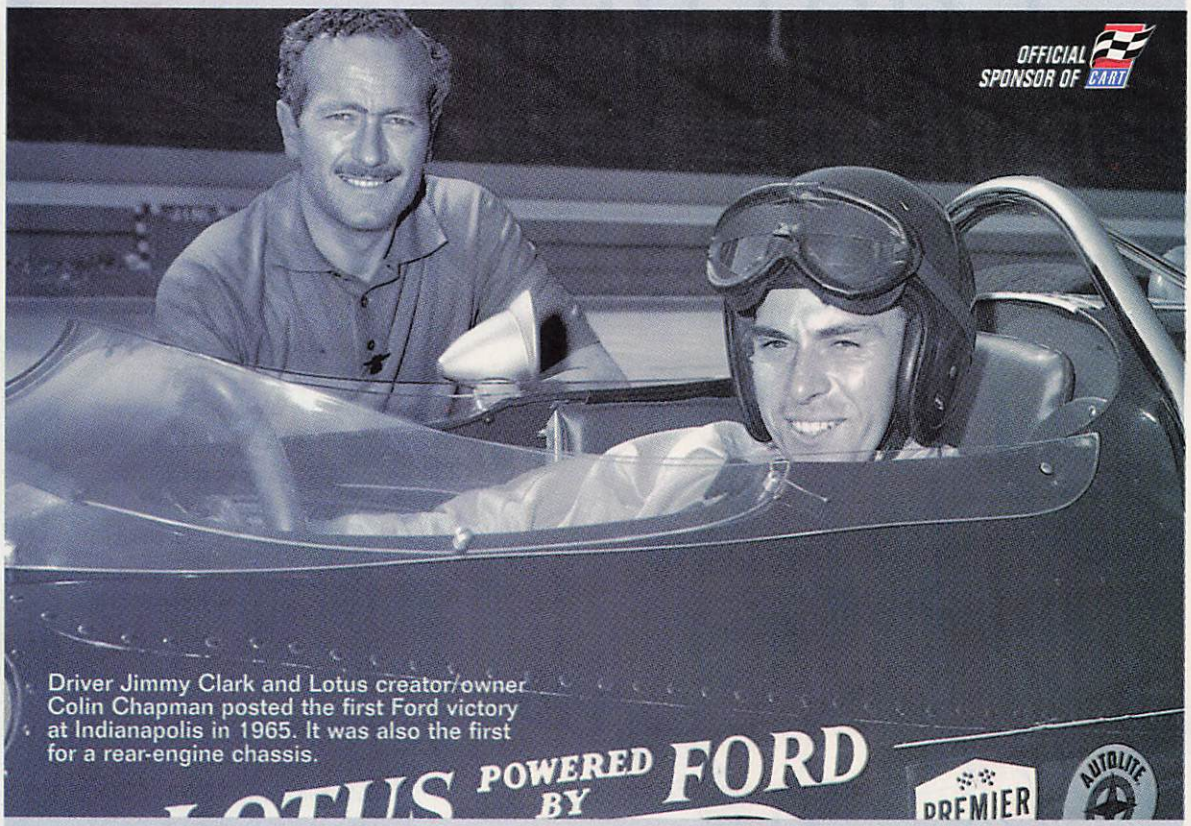
1 » GAME FACE
Washboard abs are optional, but everyone should strive for a polished complexion. Don't leave home without skin-buffing scrubs like Polo Sport, $15 from **Macys.com**.

2 » HEART SMART
Monitor your heart-rate and workout specs, then upload and track your progress with the SportBrain exercise and fitness tracker, $99 from **The Sports Authority (thesportsauthority.com)**.

3 » WHATCHA PACKIN'?
Whether boxing or biking, all jocks should take a tote. The perfect accessory to well-sculpted arms and shoulders is the Champion All Star sport bag, $40 from **Champion (www.championusa.com)**.

4 » RUN WITH IT
Well-designed sneakers will save your feet. Looking sleek never hurt them, either. Get your game on with Quicklite sneakers, $75 from **Adidas (thestore.adidas.com)**. **MEAGHAN O'NEILL**

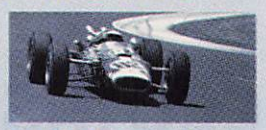
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVIES+STARR



Driver Jimmy Clark and Lotus creator/owner Colin Chapman posted the first Ford victory at Indianapolis in 1965. It was also the first for a rear-engine chassis.

the goal is not to meet expectations, but to define new ones.

At Ford, our goal is to stay on the cutting edge by constantly thinking ahead. And as another season of Ford Racing heats up, we're taking aim at setting higher standards. It's all part of a winning attitude that's at the very core of Ford Racing, an attitude exemplified by track legends Jimmy Clark and Colin Chapman, whose spirit and passion broke new ground in competitive motorsports. It's this same forward-thinking attitude that shapes our products as we move into the new century.



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Content

what to watch, hear, read, and play online

Film

SURFIN' SUCCOTASH!

Some familiar faces get the Shockwave treatment

IF YOU GET THE FEELING THAT EDGY NET CARTOONS LIKE SHOCKWAVE.COM'S *SEX SLAVE* AND Camp Chaos's *Nippleman* were just, you know, trying a little too hard, the Web-ification of the Warner Bros. gang is a welcome event. Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig, the Tasmanian Devil, and the rest are now appearing in original Web-only episodes—Shockwave clips that load fast, play smoothly, and still have that classic Merrie Melodies look that most of us learned to love as kids.

The kickoff series is the *Survivor* riff "Toon Marooned," in which host Bugs displays Jeff Probstian aplomb as others suffer the jungle hardships of Festeroon, "the malaria capital of the world." Dastardly schemer Daffy Duck calls a secret meeting to form a strategic alliance. Then a piano falls on his head. At a tribal council, Granny votes to exile Regis Philbin ("I don't want him on this island," she asserts); Elmer Fudd votes to exile himself; Yosemite Sam doesn't understand the ballots. Then a safe falls on Daffy's head. Business as usual—and we mean that in the best way possible. **[looneytunes.warnerbros.com]** **JOSH ROBERTSON**

CHECK IT OUT GO TO YIL.COM/CRITICS FOR MORE INFO

Film Shorts

CHI-CHIAN The beautiful and bizarre series *Chi-Chian* follows a young pacifist's adventures in postwar 31st-century Manhattan. Armed with a biologically advanced superpower suit, Chi-Chian sets out to protect a friendly race of giant cockroaches from an evil religious sect. Combining an intricate story line with beautiful collage and postmodern humor, it's a futuristic fairy tale with ironic bite. **R.B.** ★★★★ **Scifi.com [scifi.com/chichian]**

MORE Like many stop-motion animators, director Mark Osborne is working in the misty shadows of such auteurs as Jan Svankmajer and the brothers Quay, but his award-winning short, *More*, has a warm, personal feel. Without dialogue, it presents a compelling narrative about an inventor who tries to relieve his boredom by crafting a product that promises bliss. Osborne has a real fondness for industrial detritus and alienation, but luckily, he also depicts his character's fantasies in blazing color. **S.E.** ★★★ **Ifilm [ifilm.com]**

SCHRODINGER'S CAT *Pi* meets *Groundhog Day* as a harried professor tries to escape his obsession with quantum physics and compulsive coin tossing. Instead, he's accosted by parallel realities at every turn. Brimming with unrealized comedic potential, the film glitters brightest when emphasizing its pretty design and strange scenario. **R.B.** ★★★ **Alwaysl.com [alwaysif.com/movie.asp?ID=2240&c=&cat=&sub=]**

MON **MOZART IN THE MORNING:** 9 A.M. SOME CONCERTI WITH YOUR COFFEE? **[KDFC.COM]**

WED **POP CANDY:** 1 P.M. DISCUSS TODAY'S SUGARCOATED POP CULTURE. **[USATODAY.COM/COMMUNITY/CHAT/CHATSKED.HTM]**

FOTO FANTASIES

Games

WORLDWIDE WARFARE

Fight old foes anew with this fall's multiplayer offerings

WAR MIGHT BE HELL, BUT ONLINE MULTIPLAYER WWII gaming will soon be heaven, thanks to a couple of new releases. First on the battlefield is Strategy First's World War II Online: Blitzkrieg, which supports as many as 10,000 "grognards" (war game fanatics) on each of its servers. Played from an immersive first-person perspective, it aims to re-create the Battle for France, where players can choose to fight as the British, French, or Germans. And with Western Europe rendered at half-scale, it will host the largest 3-D terrain of any online game.

Also on tap is Electronic Arts' Medal of Honor: Allied Assault. While this gorgeous game is playable as an offline, single-player experience, the spotlight goes to the multiplayer matches, including team varieties that support up to 15 players. Call in air strikes or hop into tanks, Jeeps, and motorcycles. Just don't marvel at the stunning scenery for too long. **[wwiionline.com]; [moh.ea.com]** **MARC SALTZMAN**

Music

ROYAL FUNK

Wiring the artist formerly known as Terence Trent D'Arby

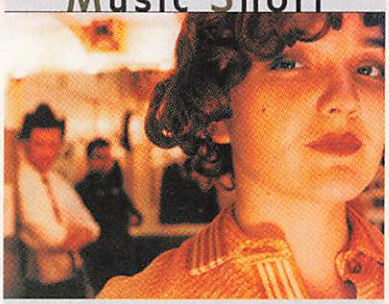
WHEN TERENCE TRENT D'ARBY RELEASED HIS FUNKY, SOULFUL 1987 DEBUT, *INTRODUCING THE HARDLINE ACCORDING TO TERENCE TRENT D'ARBY,* many critics deemed him the heir apparent to Prince. So it's not surprising that he has recently taken a page or two from the Purple One's playbook, not only changing his name (albeit to something pronounceable, Sananda Maitreya) but also releasing his latest album, *Wild Card,* online—first on a Web site, and later through such e-tailers as Amazon.com. Funk-rock tunes such as "The Inner Scream" and "Suga Free" remind us why we compared him to Prince in the first place, while the slinky "Designated Fool" reminds us why we often listened to him by candlelight. But the album is no *Purple Rain,* let alone another *Hardline.* Awkward tunes such as "And They Will Never Know You" and "O Divinia" make it apparent why D'Arby hasn't ascended to the throne. **[www.prosieben.de/magazin/music/backstage/terence_soundfiles]** **PAUL SEMEL**

Game Shorts

ARCANUM Created by Tim Cain of the popular Fallout series, Sierra's Arcanum takes place in a world where magic and technology coexist, although not entirely peacefully. Multiplayer options for this addictive role-playing game include the ability to form parties with other players, or swap custom-made dungeons and campaigns created with the World Editor, bundled on the disc. **M.S. (Sierra, $45) [www.sierrastudios.com/games/arcanum]** ★★★½

MAFIAMOB Feeling like a goodfella? For less than $20 a year, Tony Soprano wanna-bes can indulge in MafiaMob, an online-only old-school gangster game where players can whack dons for big cash, get thrown in jail, bribe political officials, beat up pimps, and indulge in a handful of other Disney-esque activities. Fun for the whole "family." **M.S. [mafiamob.com]** ★★★

Music Short



GLORIA DELUXE, "THE LITTLE MAN'S MOURNFUL CRY" Accordion-driven performance-rock troupe Gloria Deluxe is the definitive pub band (if your definitive pub is a wartime cabaret). But for those who prefer to stay home, their Web site features MP3s of some of their best live performances. Whether in haunted-oompah or ironic honky-tonk mode, their lovelorn anthems ease the pain. **A.M. [gloriadeluxe.com]** ★★★½

THE CONTENT COMMITTEE: RACHEL BOYNTON, STEVE ERICKSON, ADAM McGOVERN, MARC SALTZMAN

GLORIA DELUXE: THOMAS HOPKINS

FRI **N.E.W. SHOW:** 5 P.M. THE FICKLE FINANCE OF THE NEW ECONOMY. **[CNN.COM/CHAT]**

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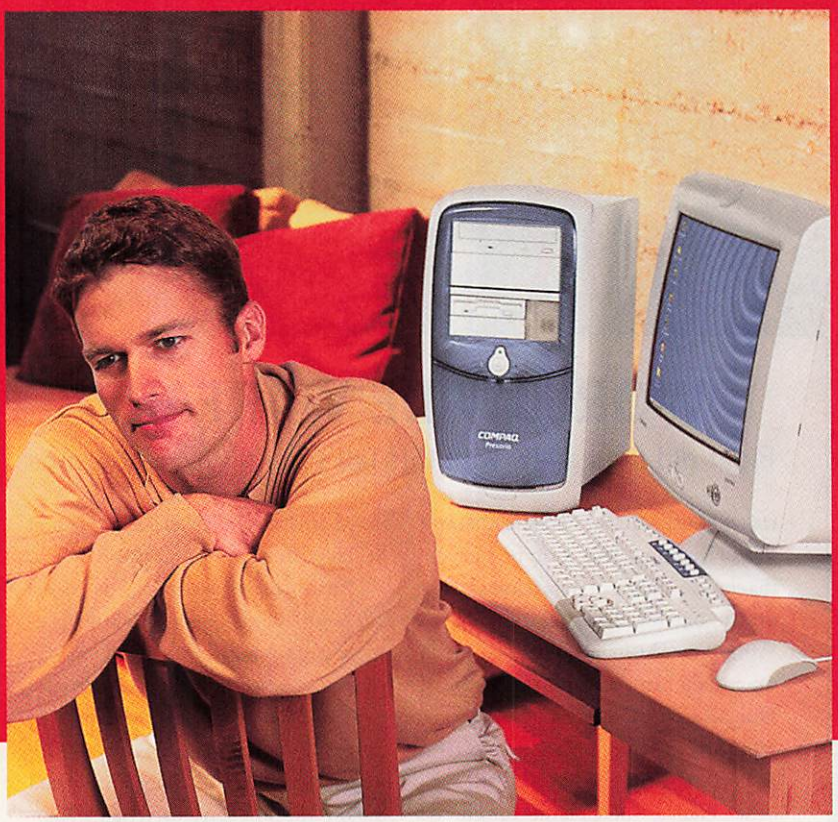

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intel inside pentium III

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Sure, your PDA can store contacts and to-do lists, but Sony's newest Palm OS-based **Clié** handheld jumps with both feet into the 21st century. The Clié is so multimedia-friendly that you might think of it as a Personal Entertainment Device instead of a PDA. It includes a built-in MP3 player, a high-resolution color screen that plays video, and a jog wheel (on the left) for one-handed operation. **$500 [sonystyle.com/vaio/clie]**

MP3 ON THE AIR

Until now, you could enjoy your kick-ass collection of MP3s only on the PC in your den. Finally, a way to move digital music around the house: **U.S. Robotics' SoundLink** sets up a wireless connection of up to 1,000 feet between a PC and a stereo. Plug the SoundLink transmitter into the computer, and connect the receiver to your amplifier's audio input (or, even simpler, just tune your FM receiver to 88.1). **$100 [www.usr.com]**

IT'S GOT YOUR BACK

Ahhhhh....It's hard to guess which body part will thank you first for parking yourself in Vitra's sexily ergonomic **Ypsilon** chair. Infinitely adjustable, the chair's backrest is designed to ease you from the upright position into a comfortable recline. The Ypsilon also features a mesh-covered seat that keeps the air circulating. Lean back, sit for a while, and you'll wish the Ypsilon had a built-in alarm clock. **$1,045 [www.vitra.com]**

cool tools

by don willmott

SHIRT-POCKET SNAPSHOTS

You'd have to be a CIA superspy to get your hands on a digital camera smaller than this one. But even though it's the size of a credit card and only 1.2 inches thick, **Kyocera's Finecam S3** doesn't cut any corners. It's a high-end, 3.34-megapixel model with a 2X optical zoom, a five-mode flash, and a color LCD viewing panel. Images are stored on SD or MMC memory cards; the camera comes with a card reader. **$699 [yashica.com]**

THE NEW FACE OF MESSAGING

The **Timex Internet Messenger** watch isn't Timex's first attempt at a Web-enabled wrist mate, but it's 28 percent smaller and $60 less costly than its predecessor. It can deliver news, stocks, weather, and e-mail (which scrolls by, ticker-style), and serves as a one-way pager. Online access is provided by SkyTel ($10 a month and up). Oh, and it's a sport watch, too, with stopwatch features and night lighting. **$99 [timex.com]**

MAGIC TAPE

The **Digisette DUO-64** MP3 player fits in any cassette player when you travel by car or use a portable stereo (of course, it also works as a stand-alone). The player comes with 64MB of memory, and it's expandable to 128MB through MMC memory cards. Also on board: rechargeable batteries and a voice recorder good for five hours—at 25 percent less than the price of the previous model. **$229 [digisette.com]**

find it

BUILD YOUR OWN HOME PAGE WITHOUT LEARNING A LICK OF HTML

Sooner or later, having your own Web address will be as essential as having a phone number or e-mail account. Where else are you going to post your credentials for potential employers or blind dates, or brag about your 300-piece drill bit set?

Thanks to the latest Web-hosting services, you can finally box up that HTML manual that's been sitting around gathering dust. At **Homestead [homestead.com]**, for example, surfers can build pages simply by dragging and dropping text, images, and links onto a blank home page editor. You can also choose among Homestead's many templates to help you assemble a page in minutes. When you're finished building your site, click Save and it's instantly published to the Net with a unique URL. (At press time, Homestead announced that it will limit the number of Web pages that subscribers can build for free. However, Homestead will continue to offer a pay service for surfers who are looking to build larger personal or professional e-commerce sites.)

Dozens of other Web-hosting services are nearly as easy to use but don't pack as much punch. The wildly popular **Yahoo! GeoCities [geocities.com]** and **Tripod [tripod.com]** force surfers to use boilerplate interfaces, and they impose annoying pop-up ads, which infringe on your personal Web space. Even so, GeoCities and Tripod are useful for quickly cobbling together such everyday necessities as online birthday cards and party invitations. And neither site discriminates on the basis of operating system, so Mac users can build away.

Advanced surfers who already have a Web site should check in at **Apps.com** or **MyComputer.com**. Both offer code that you can cut and paste to add such features as password security, cool animations, and a site-search engine (free at MyComputer.com).

P.E. REED/PHOTONICA

quick tips

PRIORITY MAIL

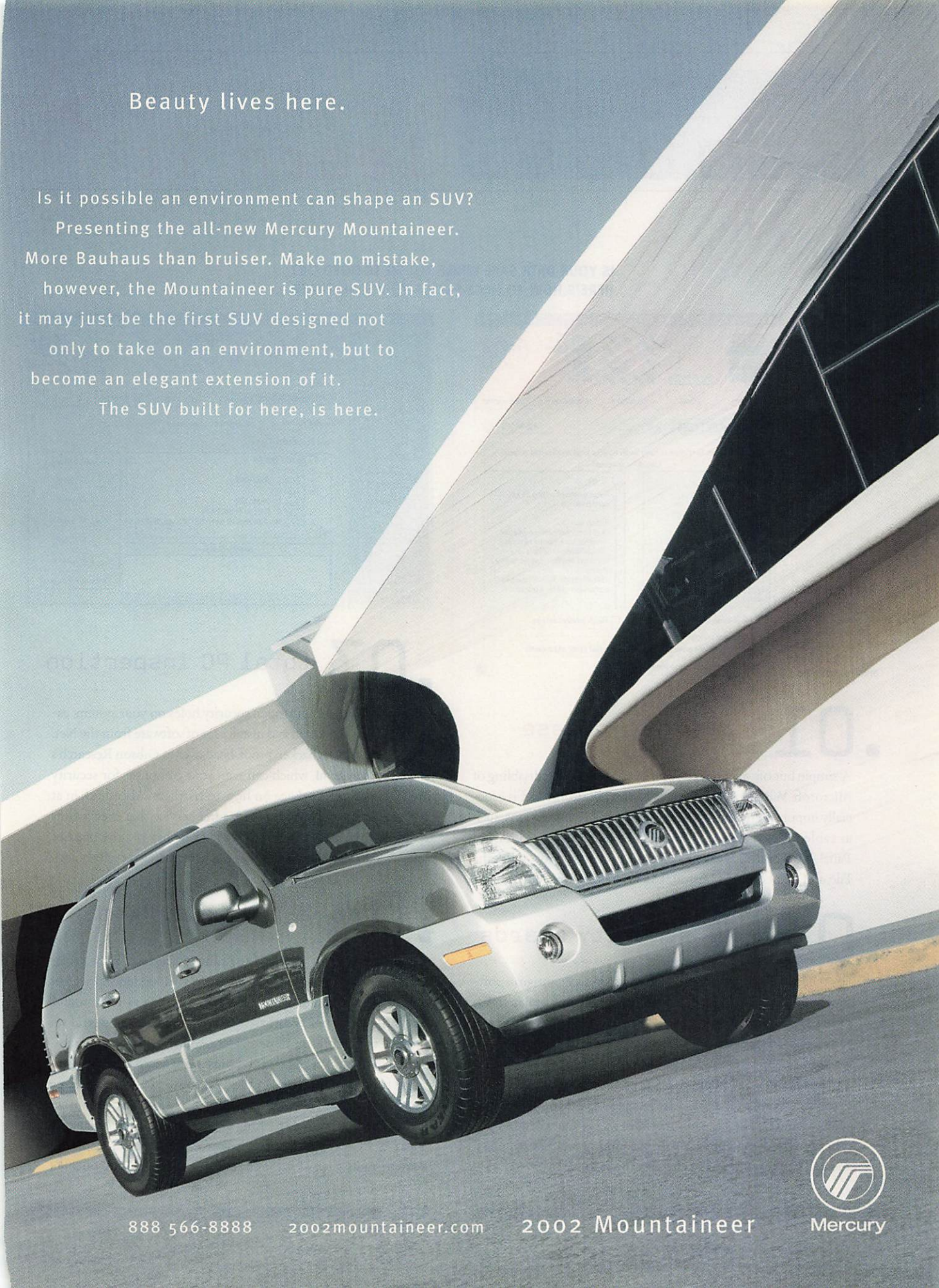
The fastest way to fire off an e-mail while surfing the Web is by entering the word *mailto:* (followed by an e-mail address) into the location field of your browser and then hitting the return key. This will launch a new composition window in your PC's default e-mail program.

LINK STOW AWAY

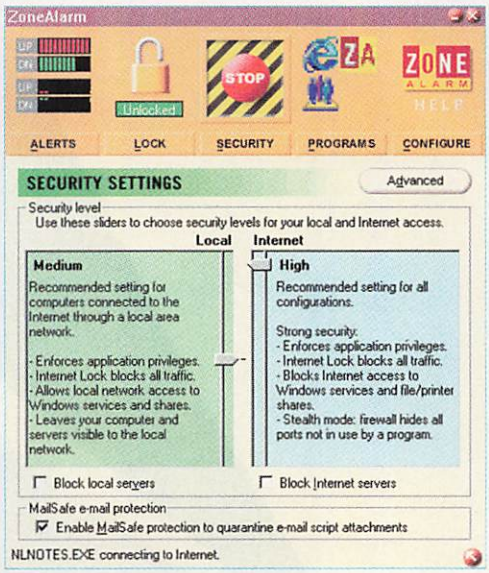
With **Q [qmgn.com]**, surfers can save Web pages to their PC with a click of the mouse. Just drag and drop links onto the program's Palm-esque interface to begin storing images, movies, and entire sites to your hard drive. The free program is particularly useful for anyone creating an offline Web presentation or organizing research data culled from the Net.

WINDOWS DRESSING

Tired of the same ol' home page? A new site called **GoBeez [gobeez.com]** can make logging on a little more interesting. Simply change your home page to **[gobeez.com/servlet/settings]**, choose a subject category (such as science, travel, or sports), and the free service will take you to a new destination every time you open your browser.


Beauty lives here.
Is it possible an environment can shape an SUV?
Presenting the all-new Mercury Mountaineer.
More Bauhaus than bruiser. Make no mistake,
however, the Mountaineer is pure SUV. In fact,
it may just be the first SUV designed not
only to take on an environment, but to
become an elegant extension of it.
The SUV built for here, is here.
888 566-8888
2002mountaineer.com
2002 Mountaineer
Mercury

IS YOUR DATA SAFE WHILE YOU'RE LOGGED ON? HERE'S HOW TO HACK-PROOF YOUR COMPUTER



SAFE & SOUND Lock out digital intruders with ZoneAlarm; pick up eSafe Desktop (far right), free antivirus software.

.01 no sharing, please

A simple but oft overlooked security measure is the disabling of Microsoft Windows' file-sharing option. Shutting it off is especially important for surfers who use always-on connections, such as cable modems or DSL lines. Go to Start/Settings/Control Panel/Network. This will launch the Network window. Click the File and Print Sharing button. Uncheck both available options.

.02 free security guards

For the love of all that is good in the universe, get antivirus software. You don't even have to spend a cent. Both **Inoculatelt Personal Edition [antivirus.cai.com]** and **eSafe Desktop 3.0 [ealaddin.com/esafe/desktop/index.asp]** are excellent free antivirus programs. They work on systems running Windows 95, 98, NT, 2000, or ME.

Broadband users should also pick up **ZoneAlarm [zonelabs.com]**, a free firewall that monitors all incoming and outgoing traffic on your computer. The PC-only program warns you whenever another program on your system is attempting to access the Net, and gives you the option of enabling or disabling it.

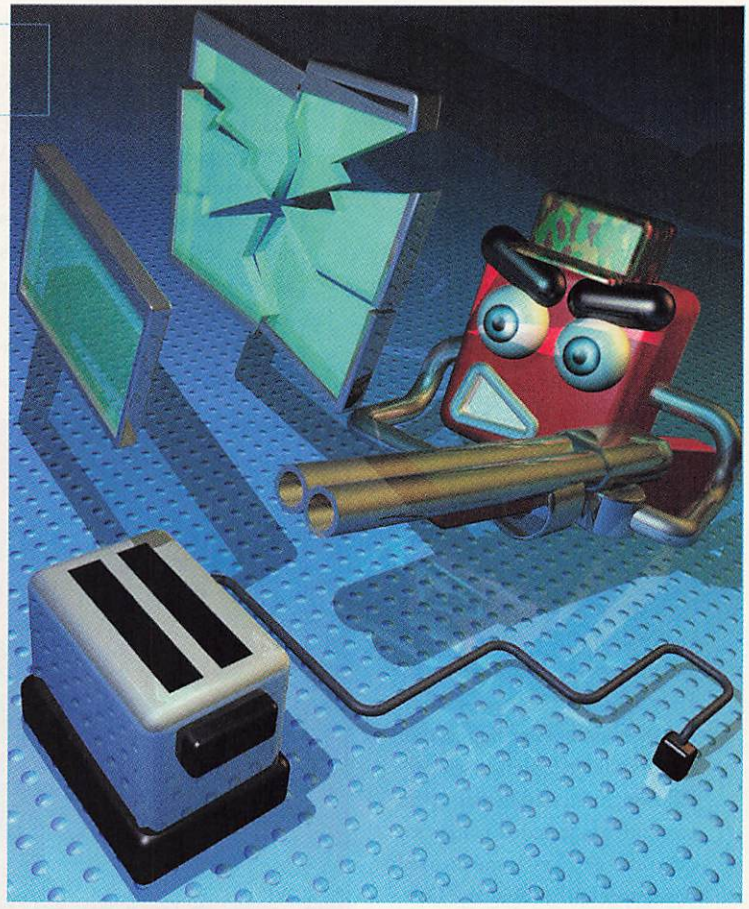
.03 total PC inspection

It's easy to inadvertently open security holes on your system, especially if you download and install a lot of software from the Net. To see if your PC is hacker-proof, head over to Gibson Research's **ShieldsUp! [grc.com]**, which can scan your computer for security breaches and offer advice on how to fix them. Also check in at **ZDNet: Updates.com [updates.com]**, a free service that checks your system's programs to determine whether they require patches (bits of code that plug up software flaws, including security holes).

.04 e-mail cloaking

If there's one thing that surfers want to keep secure, it's their e-mail. The surest way to keep private correspondence private is by encrypting sent messages. This is not as difficult as it may sound. **Hushmail.com**, a free Web-based service, provides a powerful yet simple encryption solution for Net neophytes. The site scrambles all outgoing messages and claims it can guard against everything from office snoops to the FBI's information-gathering Carnivore software. If you'd like to lock up old e-mails or any other file on your computer, try using **Cryptext [pcug.org.au/~njpayne]**. This free PC-only program can password-protect your data with a simple right-click of the mouse. **LOU DOLINAR**

surf guru



CRUSH ANNOYING INTERNET ADS; CONSOLIDATE YOUR E-MAIL ACCOUNTS

Q» When I visit some sites, my browser automatically launches irritating advertisements. Is there a way to permanently get rid of these pop-up windows?

A» The simplest way to shoo away these unwanted solicitations is by installing a free utility called **Surf in Peace [iconlabs.com]**. The PC-only program will suppress any window that attempts to pop up on your screen. Also check out **PopUp Killer [software.xfx.net/downloads.htm]** and **Banner Zapper [www.crosswinds.net/~bannerzapper]**. The PC-only programs are free to try; Banner Zapper costs $7.95 to register.

Q» I have five different e-mail addresses, and I can't keep track of all the incoming messages. Is there a way to consolidate my in-boxes?

A» *Five* e-mail accounts? If you simply can't do without so many addresses, download and install **ePrompter [eprompter.com]**. The program can check up to eight different accounts and is compatible with both POP3 and Web-based e-mail, including Yahoo! Mail, AOL Mail, Hotmail, and Juno. When new e-mail arrives, the software displays the number of unread messages in each in-box. Although ePrompter handles plain text messages quite well, it can't read attachments or display HTML. The program is free and works on systems running Windows 95, 98, 2000, or NT. Mac users should look into **eMail Alert! [intellisw.com]**, which can check multiple POP3 e-mail accounts as well. It's free to try and costs $12 to $15 to buy (depending on the version you choose).

Q» When I visit Web sites like My Yahoo! that require a log-in, Microsoft Internet Explorer asks if I'd like the browser to remember my password. Is it a bad idea to say yes?

A» I find it convenient to have Internet Explorer remember user names and passwords to frequently visited sites. But I would never instruct it to remember passwords for sites that store such private data as financial holdings and e-mail. It would be all too easy for, say, a coworker to log in to these accounts were he or she to use your computer. If you want to make Internet Explorer forget your passwords, you'll have to go to the Tools menu and choose Internet Options. This will launch the Internet Options window. Click the Content tab and press the AutoComplete button. This will launch the AutoComplete window. Then click the Clear Forms and Clear Passwords buttons. Click OK.

ILLUSTRATION: EDDIE BOWEN/WWW.COSMO7.COM

aol watch

AOL occasionally sends its members "official" e-mails, which contain information about everything from software upgrades to alerts about viruses and online scams. Not surprisingly, many Internet con artists attempt to mimic these official messages with the intent to defraud. How can you tell the difference between the real deal and the fakes? Look for these three attributes in the e-mail: 1) The message appears as a blue envelope in your in-box. 2) The message has the official blue AOL Mail seal in its lower left-hand corner. 3) The message is surrounded by a blue border. If the message lacks any of these traits, delete it posthaste.

MORE GURU FOR DAILY TIPS AND ADVICE, SURF OVER TO YIL.COM/GURU

VIRTUAL ABUSE

The Girl Who Wasn't There

Randall van der Woning once thought he had met a young woman named Kaycee. She was 18, bubbly and effervescent, and lived in Kansas with her mother, Debbie. When Kaycee revealed she had cancer, van der Woning helped Kaycee and Debbie tell their story via an online journal. Van der Woning and others who followed her journal, called "Living Colours: A Diary of Survival," laughed, prayed, and cried with and for Kaycee—who died the day after Mother's Day. Soon after, however, some of the thousands of readers who had been obsessively following this real-life soap opera for nearly a year started asking such questions as: How come no local newspaper ran her obituary? Debbie soon admitted that this journal was constructed from other peoples' stories, a confession that in itself was untrue. Everything about Kaycee's online life was a lie, which ended when van der Woning pulled the plug. Now all that's left is an emotion—living on at the many online discussion groups about Kaycee—an emotion for something that never happened.

Debbie Swenson wasn't your average sex-change-for-the-evening AOL hoaxer. For months, van der Woning phoned Debbie and "Kaycee" regularly, exchanging gifts and photos. Accounts of Kaycee's hospital routine were realistic. Van der Woning thinks things might have gone on even longer if he hadn't suggested that he fly from Hong Kong to meet Kaycee in person: "When I look back, I see little things that might have raised flags. But when a person is dealing with stress you write those off as par for the course. Nothing ever raised a really bright red flag."

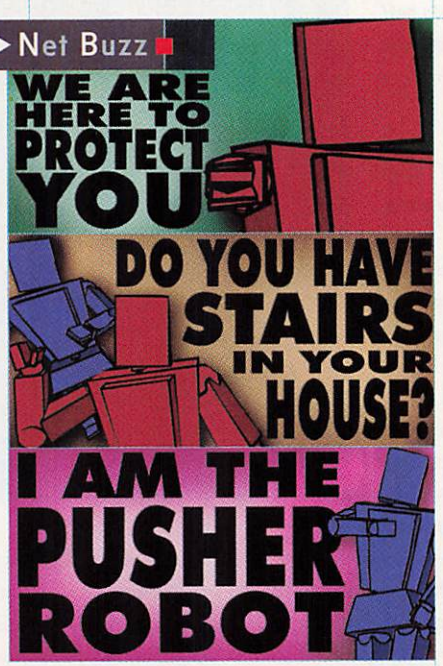
Debbie never asked for money, which helped keep her hoax from turning a legal corner toward something more like fraud. If anyone has cause for complaint, it's probably the woman whose photos she "borrowed." (Finding your own picture online, being claimed as a daughter by an acquaintance, and reading you've died all must be harrowing, but good luck explaining it in court.)

Kaycee's supporters asked themselves if they had been too gullible. Many concluded that it was better to believe and be wrong than to have risked insensitivity toward a real Kaycee. Or to a real Debbie; some suggest that her behavior was due less to malice than to mental illness, and that she deserves compassion as much as "Kaycee" did.

A "truly sad" answer, snorts Joey Skaggs, legendary purveyor of culturally conscious pranks. Dismissing the Kaycee hoax as "rank, amateurish, *needy*," he finds some of the more emotional responses troubling: "When you offend peoples' value systems, they can get very angry—and vindictive. Some people would, rather than admit that they were had, have their feelings [about Kaycee] be the significant matter. They'd rather deal with those feelings than the truth."

What truth? With no Kaycee and no journal left, all that remains is a residue of discussion online at spots like **Kaycee Nicole: Hurt & Angry & Questioning Reality [teacosy.net/ubb/Forum15/HTML/000103.html]**. Kaycee has already earned a spot in Yahoo! Urban Legends and a place in Net history. As for the guy who got fooled first, van der Woning has few regrets. "This thing, if anything, has pulled [Kaycee's readers] together in a way, inasmuch as they were able to uncover the truth," he says. "As for me, I'm not grieving. After all, no one died." **ANGELA GUNN**

Net Buzz



SPACE INVADER The latest craze filling in-boxes? **The Terrible Secret of Space [jonathonrobinson.com/secret.html]**, Jonathon Robinson's Flash "video" for another song by the band behind "All Your Base."

Trust us

nobodyhere.com/justme
janetreno.rotten.com/spiral
zompist.com/andalou.htm
blacksuperhero.com
books.guardian.co.uk/top10s

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SPORTS WIRE

Doug Glanville's Ba-Da-Bingbong

When Philadelphia Phillies outfielder Doug Glanville slammed two home runs off Arizona Diamondbacks fireballer Curt Schilling in May, he had only one thing on his mind: revenge on the soul of Bingbong!

It seems as if baseball's rivalries extend past the foul lines all the way to the Net. Glanville and Schilling, former Phillies teammates, still keep in touch through rousing sessions of **EverQuest [everquest.station.sony.com]**, the popular medieval role-playing computer game. Schilling apparently lured Glanville into teaming up their Bingbong and Cylc characters to venture inside enemy territory. But Schilling and Cylc irresponsibly bailed too early, and Glanville's beloved Bingbong—"a good-natured character," he mourns—got killed.

"Somewhere in there," Glanville recalls, "Schill had sent a message to me, saying, 'RUN!!!!!!!' But he typed this as he was already a mile away from danger and standing next to guards to protect him. Needless to say, my lifeless character was now chicken feed." Alas, Bingbong's soul got a measure of payback when Glanville's two homers spanked Schilling, one of the premier pitchers in the majors, and helped propel the Phillies to a 5–1 win.

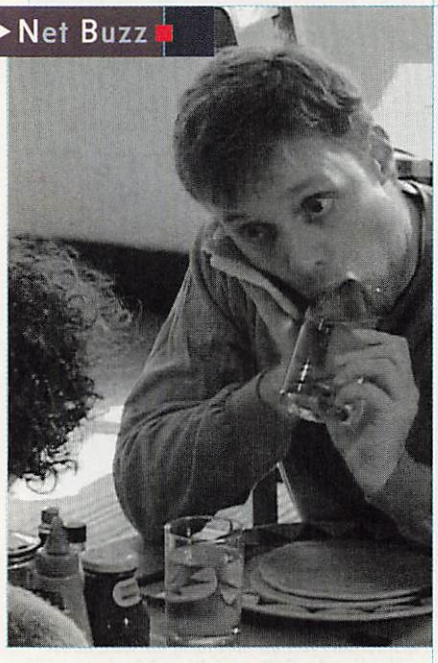
Though this is the first documented instance of baseball Web revenge, such vendettas are probably more prevalent than we know. As children of the Atari generation, most big-leaguers play video games—through media ranging from Sony PlayStation to the Net—in the clubhouse, on the team plane, or during interminable hotel stays. (When the Pittsburgh Pirates' Jason Kendall watched a teammate control a cyber-Kendall in a Nintendo 64 baseball game one day, he cheered, "Cool—I rake lefties!") And the technocraze goes beyond games: With just a little bit of disposable income on their hands, major-leaguers are walking gadget guys, toting Palm VIIs, souped-up laptops, and DVD players.

Glanville is among the rarest of ballplayers in that he probably understands how these gizmos actually work. The former engineering student at the University of Pennsylvania wrote his 1992 senior thesis on the viability of a new baseball stadium in downtown Philly. (They could truly call it "the house that Glanville built.") He carries a Gateway laptop to check out stadium designs at **Ballparks [ballparks.com]** and to pump up his Palm at **AvantGo [avantgo.com]**. And, of course, to play EverQuest. He occasionally runs into fans who decipher his username and instant-message him, "Are you the baseball player?" (He usually says no.) "The Internet gives you the freedom to be a regular person," he claims. "You're anonymous. You can do anything."

Then again, how many EverQuest fiends get to hit two home runs off their nemesis?

"Things like that do not go unavenged," Glanville says of Bingbong's demise. "Sometimes it spills out onto the field of play." **ALAN SCHWARZ**

Net Buzz



ZE FRANK

WANT HOT STUFF ONLINE? Check out **How to Impress Your Date [zefrank.com/date_1/navigation.html]**, a satirical how-to video of a less-than-savvy male strutting his romantic stuff.

Big Yahoo! Buzz Movers

French Open	
The classic on clay	**+8,183%**
Shannyn Sossamon	
Lady of the "Knight"	**+5,530%**
Polygamy	
Multiple wives...still illegal	**+4,166%**
Brad Paisley	
Country boy	**+3,770%**
Belinda Carlisle	
Lips like sugar, still sealed	**+3,109%**
Star Trek: Enterprise	
Yet another final frontier	**+2,378%**

A subject's buzz score is the percentage of users searching for that topic on Yahoo!, multiplied by a constant to make the number easier to read. The percentages shown above are the changes in the subjects' buzz scores between May 6 and June 6, 2001. Yahoo! tracks daily buzz leaders and movers at **Yahoo! Buzz Index [buzz.yahoo.com]**.

AMERICA, ONLINE

E, the Jury

"Justice," reads the soot-stained stone façade of the Criminal Court of the City of New York, "is the firm and continuous desire to render to everyone that which is his due." Despite that noble principle, the desire to deliver justice can waver for New Yorkers on jury duty, typically three-to-five (days) in a drab waiting room with hundreds of sullen strangers.

But put down that Grisham, stop playing solitaire, wake up! Jurors with laptops can now go online during downtime at New York City Supreme Court. The Citizens Jury Project, an advocacy group, recently arranged for the installation of a data port outside the court's assembly room, all for just half a buck per minute.

The number of courts offering Internet access is on the rise. The Superior Court of Arizona in Maricopa County offers 10 wired workstations, while the Ventura County Hall of Justice in California just opened the nation's first "business center" for jurors, a 300-square-foot office equipped with phones, fax machines, a copier, and data ports.

Brian Maxey of the Citizens Jury Project applauds the trend, but he argues that courts like New York City's must make Internet access a budget priority. "People resent being pulled away from their lives, so technology offers the best way to bridge the gap," he says. "I'd love to see the court install 10 free terminals, but it's a hard sell."

The other day at New York's courthouse, jurors gave the data port a split verdict. When told of the data port, Debra Puchalla, managing editor at *Martha Stewart Living*, immediately hatched plans to get down to business: "I'll go as far as having certain files [e-mailed] to me and edit them here." But a few desks away, playwright and theater director Michael Barakiva objected to the data port's price. "Fifty cents a minute is crazy," he sniffed during a break from tapping away on his laptop. "Even if I type 90 words a minute, it will take me an hour to answer all my e-mails. That's 30 bucks." A princely sum, given the fact that jurors earn just $40 per day.

Meanwhile, Michael Staff, a bar owner who balanced his books as he awaited voir dire, dreamed of a day when the Net could truly transform jury service. "I would love to serve from home in my pajamas," he said with a chuckle. "It would be just like *The Jetsons*." Now *that* would be justice. **DAVID WALLIS**

FOR A DAILY DOSE OF NET BUZZ, CHECK OUT YIL.COM/BUZZ

Net Buzz

J.C., RISING Believers are spreading the word about **Jesus the Hot Air Balloon [ship-of-fools.com/Gadgets/Witnessing/050.html]**, a 750-pound blow-up listed in "the magazine of Christian unrest."

FIGHT OF THE MONTH
Nose Dive

The Protagonist » Al Sacui, 26-year-old iconoclast behind the surreal animation site **Nosepilot.com.**

The Antagonist » Global Internet Solutions [gisol.com], his Web host.

The Charge » Extortion. In November, Sacui signed up for a $7.95 per month hosting plan; four months and hundreds of thousands of visitors later, he was walloped with a $16,243.85 bill for exceeding a 2GB per month traffic limit, oh, more than 100 times over.

The Battle » Sacui claims the contract he signed said nothing about traffic limits, and accuses GIS of surreptitiously altering contracts in order to screw its customers. Not only has he launched his own one-man investigation and begun a frighteningly compulsive online diary about his quest for revenge, but he's also brought his complaints to the attention of the Philadelphia attorney general.

Says Al Sacui, the Noseman » According to one diary entry: "I've broken up with the girlfriend so I can dedicate myself to shutting gisol.com down."

Says GIS » "This is a legal case, and we're not allowed to talk about this case until we've resolved the issue."

Says Al Sacui, P.I. » "At first I thought there were lessons to be learned. But the more I look at it, it's just catching a thief. That's all: I'm catching a criminal."

FOREVER IN DEBT: Sacui has no plans to pay up. In the meantime, his site is being mirrored by a half-dozen devoted Nosepilot fans. **JANELLE BROWN**

JESUS BALLOON: THE MERRITT MINISTRY; BOXER ILLUSTRATION: BRUNO

ORDINARY PEOPLE DOING EXTRAORDINARY THINGS BY JEREMY CAPLAN

PATROLLING FOR SAFETY

A consumer crusader helps parents protect their kids

One hot June day in 1998, Paul Walsh heard a radio warning that gave him shivers. Costco Wholesale Corporation was recalling a huge batch of contaminated meat, a portion of which his wife coincidentally had bought for their own kids' dinner. Fearing that other parents might not have heard the news, or that he might miss the next such item, Walsh launched an e-mail newsletter and a Web site, **SafetyAlerts.com**, to spread the word about dangerous foods and products.

Walsh has three children younger than five, and like most parents, he and his wife keep a careful eye on their well-being. But on one occasion, Kathleen Walsh bought contaminated packaged chicken for dinner; she threw it away after reading about the tainted meat in her own husband's newsletter.

Various government agencies do offer sporadic safety-related consumer guidance. Government sites such as **www.FoodSafety.gov** and the **U.S. Food and Drug Administration: Recalls and Safety Alerts [www.fda.gov/opacom/7alerts.html]** publish information about recalls, but Walsh's site is more comprehensive. "Last year, there were a thousand recalls in the U.S.," he says, "but you don't hear about 70 percent of them. Unless someone dies or millions of pounds of food are involved, they often go unreported."

Walsh relies on wire reports and his own research, which he then verifies with the company in question. In addition to scouring some 170 news sources daily, he receives regular e-mail messages from a growing network of parents. Some write in after being told at their local store that something they wanted was no longer available. Often, Walsh says, companies quietly recall a product from store shelves without publicly notifying those who have already purchased it.

Walsh says parents have the right to know if they're feeding their children such delicacies as listeria-laced hot dogs, salmonella-infected sausages, bacon bits containing pieces of plastic, or counterfeit formula—all actual recalls posted on the site. "If the food tastes bad," he notes, "parents may realize not to eat it, but a two-year-old might not know how it should taste."

Walsh works on SafetyAlerts on a voluntary basis, but his full-time job also concerns safety: He maintains air traffic control software for the Federal Aviation Administration in Detroit. Unlike the FAA, which places strict security regulations on airlines and airports, the FDA's power is more limited.

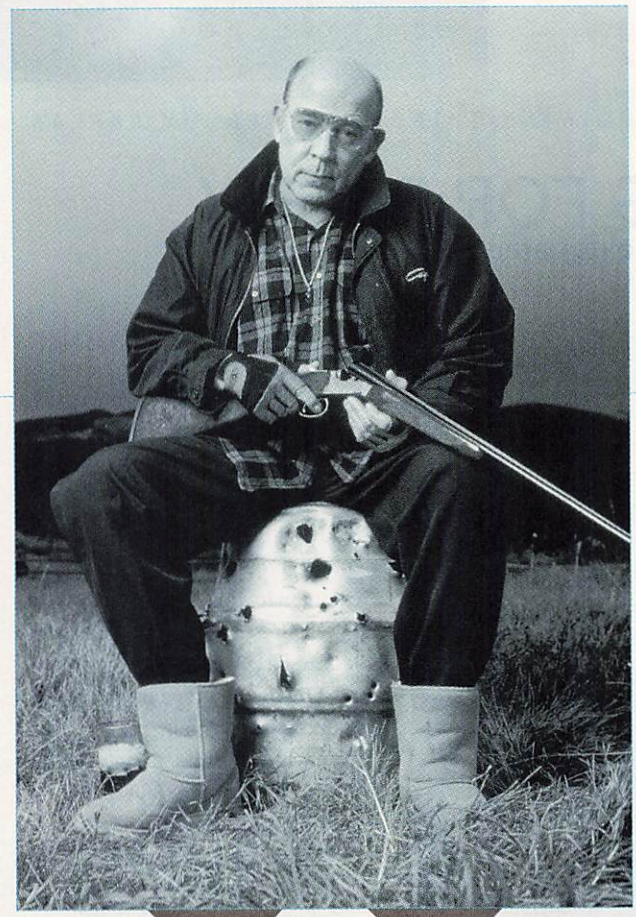
Dori Stehlin, senior adviser for the FDA site, says that the organization is working to provide the public with more complete recall information on its site. In the future, if you hear about a strawberry recall, for example, you'll be able to go to the FDA site and type in *strawberry* to find out the details.

"The government sites may improve," Walsh says, "but there are so many different departments handling product and food safety that there's no effective central resource. Safety information is usually just too well hidden, if it's public at all."

ANOTHER PIC IN THE WALL

After only a year in the Marines, Peter Allan Penfold was killed in South Vietnam, on October 17, 1967. Nearly 35 years later, his mother has only two photos of him left. A fire ravaged most of her collection, and the rest, set aside for a scrapbook, were lost in the mail. This fall, to safeguard her pair of photos, Jeanne Penfold plans to participate in the Put a Face With a Name program on **The Virtual Wall [thevirtualwall.org]**. Penfold and hundreds of other parents and friends have already set up online tributes to their loved ones through the site, established in 1998 by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. The project's goal is to ensure that a photo for each of the 58,220 fallen servicemen appears on the online wall. The site already features many photographic and recorded remembrances, and a new initiative launching this fall will enable family members and friends to scan in and post veterans' photos at copy shops across the country. In addition, the site hosts discussions, guest columns about the Vietnam War, and a Web ring of sites dedicated to veterans. ■

DONNA TEREK



A Twisted Wired Guy

The original gonzo returns to the spotlight to fight the good fight online and settle some old scores

BY HUGO PEREZ

Hunter S. Thompson is pathologically averse to doing what's expected. As a newspaperman in the '60s, he chucked the facts-first "inverted pyramid" format out a window and put himself and his perceptions at the center of his work. This so-called gonzo journalism (which he defines loosely as "a style of reporting based on William Faulkner's idea that the best fiction is far more true than any kind of journalism") helped revolutionize American writing with an offhand but infectiously readable style. Thompson is perhaps just as famous for eschewing the crusty, whiskey-drinking journalist archetype in favor of rock-star egotism and LSD, keeping pace with the obsessions of his era.

But in the end, it's all about the work. No one in 1970 could have predicted (or been prepared for) *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas,* his celebrated, rambling account of his quest for the American Dream. He outdid himself again with the political commentary of *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72* and the collected journalism of *The Great Shark Hunt,* which best define his work—actively engaged in politics and full of a supreme, impulsive distrust of anyone standing under red, white, and blue bunting.

Given his fiery activism and populist style, it was only a matter of time before Thompson got online. And, of course, he showed up at the last place imaginable. In November, after a long hiatus from a regular deadline, he signed on with **ESPN.com** (yes, ESPN.com) to launch "Hey, Rube," a sports column that strays into his home beat of politics whenever possible. Thompson has already used the column to generate attention for Lisl Auman, a

MICHAEL O'NEILL/CORBIS OUTLINE

Colorado woman convicted of felony murder in the death of a police officer, despite the fact that she was in custody and locked in the back of a police car when the cop was killed. The controversial felony murder statute allows for someone to be charged with murder if one is committed during the course of a felony in which that person took part.

"Hey, Rube" flaunts all the loopy imagery and savage bite that made Thompson a household name: "Take my word for it, folks," he wrote in May. "I have [gone to the Kentucky Derby] nine or 10 times in a row, and I still have recurring nightmares about it that cause me to wake up sweating & screaming like some kind of pig being eaten alive by meat-bats." In the same column, he refers to NBA Commissioner David Stern as a "sleazy little monster," and elsewhere he describes Roger Clinton as "a mutant brute who should have been put to sleep a long time ago." All that on a Disney-owned sports site better known for basketball highlights and baseball stats? Long live the Net.

Y-LIFE Some people will be surprised to hear you're writing for ESPN.com. But you seem to have a lot of flexibility there—and a forum to talk about political issues.

THOMPSON Absolutely—as much as I had at *The [San Francisco] Examiner*. I have very few frictions. Avoiding religious talk is one of them. Like using the comment, "Jesus, what a fool," or something. On several occasions, some editor has cut it to "Geez," which is maddening. There aren't too many places that my excesses are permitted and encouraged. Yeah, "bastard," people have gotten used to that. "Swine of the week." "The whole Bush family should be boiled alive in hot oil in a pot." There are a lot of examples. The main thing, like with any other column, is to get it in. What was that old show-business axiom? "Ninety-five percent of the show is just being there on time." I wouldn't write much without a deadline. I've made 24 consecutive deadlines with ESPN.com.

Y-LIFE You've made a lot of references to using technology as a journalist. Before the widespread adoption of the Internet, you used fax machines to send in your copy as late as possible.

THOMPSON It was a fax machine that you would carry around, and this was in the days when people who had electric typewriters were ahead of the game. I could pull into a gas station—a closed gas station in South Miami, anywhere at all—and I used to carry a 50-foot extension cord, so I could plug it into the side of the building over by the rest rooms. And as long as I had a phone that I could get a quarter into, the machine would run, and I could transmit from any phone booth anywhere in the world. It enabled me to work on that deadline schedule. I knew that I could go a long way further than the people at the magazine expected, certainly. I didn't make any real friends in the production department. It was a huge luxury. I once sent a story to *The New York Times Magazine* by fax, and they were baffled by it. They wanted it on a telex, or whatever their chosen method was. I sent them my fax, and I had to tell the guy at the op-ed page, and he bitched about it. Then he found like 40 fax machines in the basement that he didn't know existed. All the correspondents had this option. I think the Internet's a little bit like that.

'If there's one certain thing that I've learned from my own lifelong battle with the criminal justice system, it's that you can't fight the thing alone'

Y-LIFE Recently you've used your ESPN column to spotlight the case of Lisl Auman, a woman you feel has been unjustly convicted in connection with the death of a police officer because she was in custody at the time. What made you decide to get involved?

THOMPSON Are you familiar with Edmund Burke's dictum that the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing? The first time I heard that, I think, was from Bobby Kennedy in 1968, and it just stuck with me. The other thing is that I got a letter from her, out of the blue. I was aware of the case. I had followed it in the newspapers, and I knew it was an outrage. I can't take on every outrage, but at least I'm not doing nothing. It's going to be a hard battle. I think we're halfway there, by getting the best legal talent in the country. You couldn't pick a more difficult case, really. You know, *convicted, sentenced, murder of a cop,* all the wrong buzzwords.

Y-LIFE Could this case bring the kind of attention that could get this law off the books?

THOMPSON Oh, boy. It's a drastic, vicious law—made for cops, made for prosecutors, a catchall. They don't have to prove anything. The felony murder statute and its application, it's a big one. That's why the NACDL [National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers] is coming in. And I've got Morris Dees of the Southern Poverty Law Center involved, but unofficially. He just busted all those Nazis up in Idaho. He's a wonderful lawyer and a really good friend. And then I've got some appeals lawyers in Denver. I have an admirable network.

If there's one certain thing that I've learned from my own lifelong battle with the criminal justice system, it's that you can't fight the thing alone. You've got to have serious help. I would have been in the system 10 years ago if I hadn't had major rescue support, or cavalry over the hill. You can't do better than the legal team we have now. I think it's changed the whole nature of the case. She really

was put on trial for being an undesirable person. Nobody ever even accused her of committing the crime.

Y-LIFE Do you think that the Internet is effective at getting attention for this and building this kind of network?

THOMPSON Christ, it has made a gigantic difference to her and her family, who were fighting a lonely fight. She has a Web site, **Lisl (lisl.com)**. Her parents maintain one, which had something like 5,000 hits a year for the first two years. The first time I discussed it in the column, they got 14,000 hits in only five days, and they were astounded. They thought the machine was screwed up. It was a huge support thing.

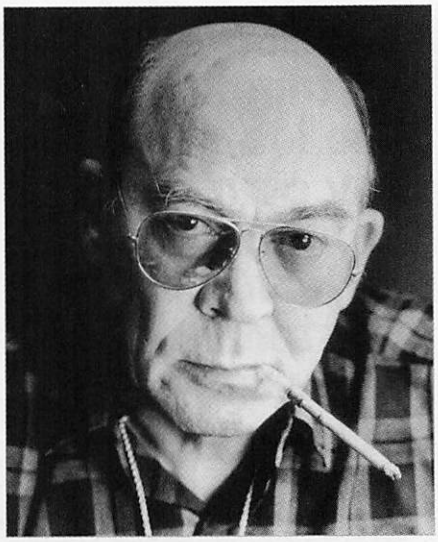
Yeah, I think the Internet is made for situations like this. The case was languishing from lack of attention and interest. My job is to make it an issue, without making myself the issue. I'm trying to get the news to cut the word *gonzo* from my identification. That's what the cops think they have a handle for: "Oh, yeah, gonzo, I know that guy." If I let them turn it into a gonzo case, it's not going to carry me too far in the appeals court process. I never have known what the hell *gonzo* means anyway.

Y-LIFE So how did gonzo journalism come about?

THOMPSON It was really born of innate laziness—which, quite frankly, I'm proud to have overcome, and nobody's even complimented me on it. I'm a monument to the triumph of laziness, because I just took the notebooks really and typed them up. I was trying to compete with photographers and illustrators. Whenever Annie Liebowitz would finish a story, she'd just send her film in. But I'd be left with the empty pages to slave over, so I thought, *Well, I can do that too.* One of these days, I'm going to put my notebooks in a film bag. They used to send them in little fishnet bags with *Press* written all over it, and when I was working, I was trying to throw my spiral notebooks in that bag to New York. So I was trying to write on the run. You oughta see my notebooks. They will teach you something.

Y-LIFE What prompted you to publish your letters? How do they fit in with the rest of your work?

THOMPSON I think that this is a perpetual motion machine that I've invented for my tribe—my people, the freelance writers of the world. I've made a new highway to riches for all of this. I'm just being paid for the work that I did then that I wasn't paid for. What this also makes clear is that I somehow lived for 10 years on no money. I don't know how that happened. My income one year at Big Sur was $780, and that was a good year. I would sometimes write three or four letters a day. I had a lot of energy in those days that I wasn't putting to use.



Y-LIFE Many of us believe that the cultural revolution of the '90s was driven by money and greed, but some idealists thought that technology could help the common man get together and win social causes. Do you see any correlation between the '90s and the '60s?

THOMPSON No. I still have yet to see that the computer revolution, or the existence of computers, has really done anything truly good for me. And it's also given huge advantages to authorities—police agencies, militaries. I can certainly do without that. In fact, I paid little attention to it until I saw that I could make money on it. The Internet is not oriented to paying for content, and it's dangerously loaded with gibberish.

There are a few Web sites that are useful—of course, *The New York Times* and some others. But hell, I get the *Times* every day anyway, and I've just become habituated to reading the paper.

The Internet's good for research sometimes, but there's too much information, really. And there's very little screening process, like there is built into the educational system. You never know what the hell is true or pertinent. It's been very good for people who just want to vent and go public with their screeds. It might have been good for me at some earlier point in my career.

Y-LIFE If you had had access to the Internet back when you were running for sheriff of Aspen in the '70s, do you think that might have helped your campaign?

THOMPSON I couldn't have done any better than I did. We had worldwide media coverage all the time. We had *The New York Times,* and the BBC, and *The Village Voice, L.A. Times.* It was a huge help, and a bit of a hindrance. You couldn't walk anywhere in the Hotel Jerome without tripping over cables, and they were literally in the door of the hotel, and up the lobby and the stairs to our headquarters on the second floor. It was a big help, but I still believe that all politics is local. Still, it's good to have national attention and awareness. It jacks up the level of attention paid to any one thing.

Y-LIFE You once said that journalism is not much fun unless there's a war going on. In the Lisl Auman case, do you feel you are waging a war?

THOMPSON Well, *war* is the wrong word. Let's say *campaign* or *issue.* It definitely raises the level of adrenaline and commitment and concentration. I've always seen journalism as a political act. ■

HUGO PEREZ is a documentary filmmaker and writer who contributes to Salon.com and NPR.

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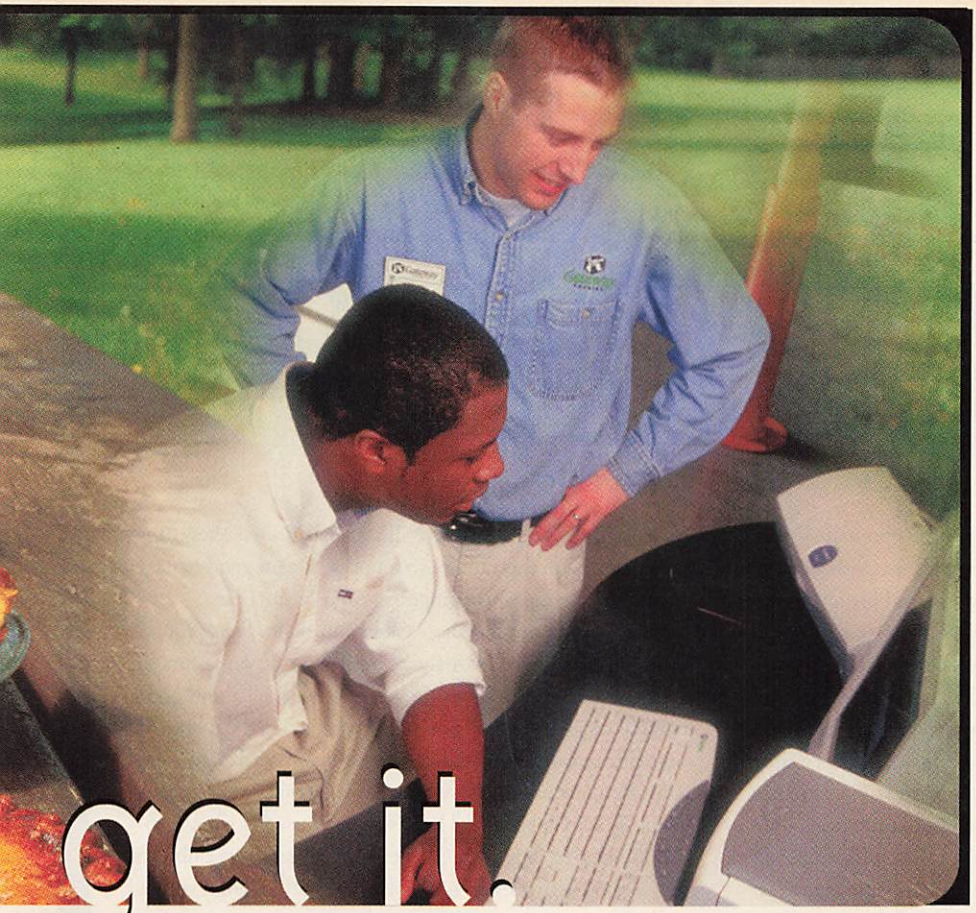

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A CONTROVERSY NOT FOR ADULTS ONLY

The decision by Yahoo! Inc. management to eliminate some of the adult content on its massive site fills me with gloom, not simply because it caved in to an organized protest from the fringe, but because when a universal site becomes provincial, we all lose. [*Y-Life* licenses the magazine's name from Yahoo! Inc. but is editorially independent. —Ed.]

One of the targets at Yahoo! was its retail operation, which listed porn tapes among thousands of others. This could not be permitted, argued the protesters. They are no doubt aware that porn tapes remain abundantly available, but by singling out a publicly traded company like Yahoo! Inc. for embarrassment, they were able to validate their sense of power and get publicity, even if they had no effect on the porn industry itself.

I was reminded of the recent trial in Provo County, Utah, where a video store owner was hauled up on charges of purveying porn. He was violating community standards, it was charged. He won an acquittal by presenting evidence that the pay-per-view consumption of porn in Provo County was approximately twice the national average for cities the size of Provo. The *New York Times* coverage observed that major hotel chains and communications empires make millions on porn.

Although Yahoo! Inc.'s decision to ban porn retailers will have a negligible effect on sales, another area of Yahoo! is more vulnerable. The Yahoo! Clubs area contains many adult clubs, which were until recently categorized by gender, fetish, behavioral specialty, or body part. My attention was drawn to them by "A New Way to Be Mad," an article by Carl Elliott in the December 2000 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* that examined the Web's role in bringing together people who previously thought they were unique in their sexual obsessions. The article focused on those who feel an urgent need to have body parts amputated. Not my cup of tea, but after all, aren't nose jobs, breast reductions, and liposuction procedures socially acceptable manifestations of a similar desire? Elliott mentioned Web sites where users with this rare fetish found soul mates and named themselves "devotees" (of amputees) and "wanna-bes."

Fascinated, I went to Yahoo! Clubs and, under *fetishes,* found that people wanted to share their sexual thoughts on cashmere sweaters, teddy bears, noses, fingernails, eyeglasses, and photographs of shoes stepping on stuff. Just reading the names of some clubs created a fingernails-on-the-blackboard effect (and of course there are people who are turned on by that as well, especially when performed by a woman dressed as a teacher).

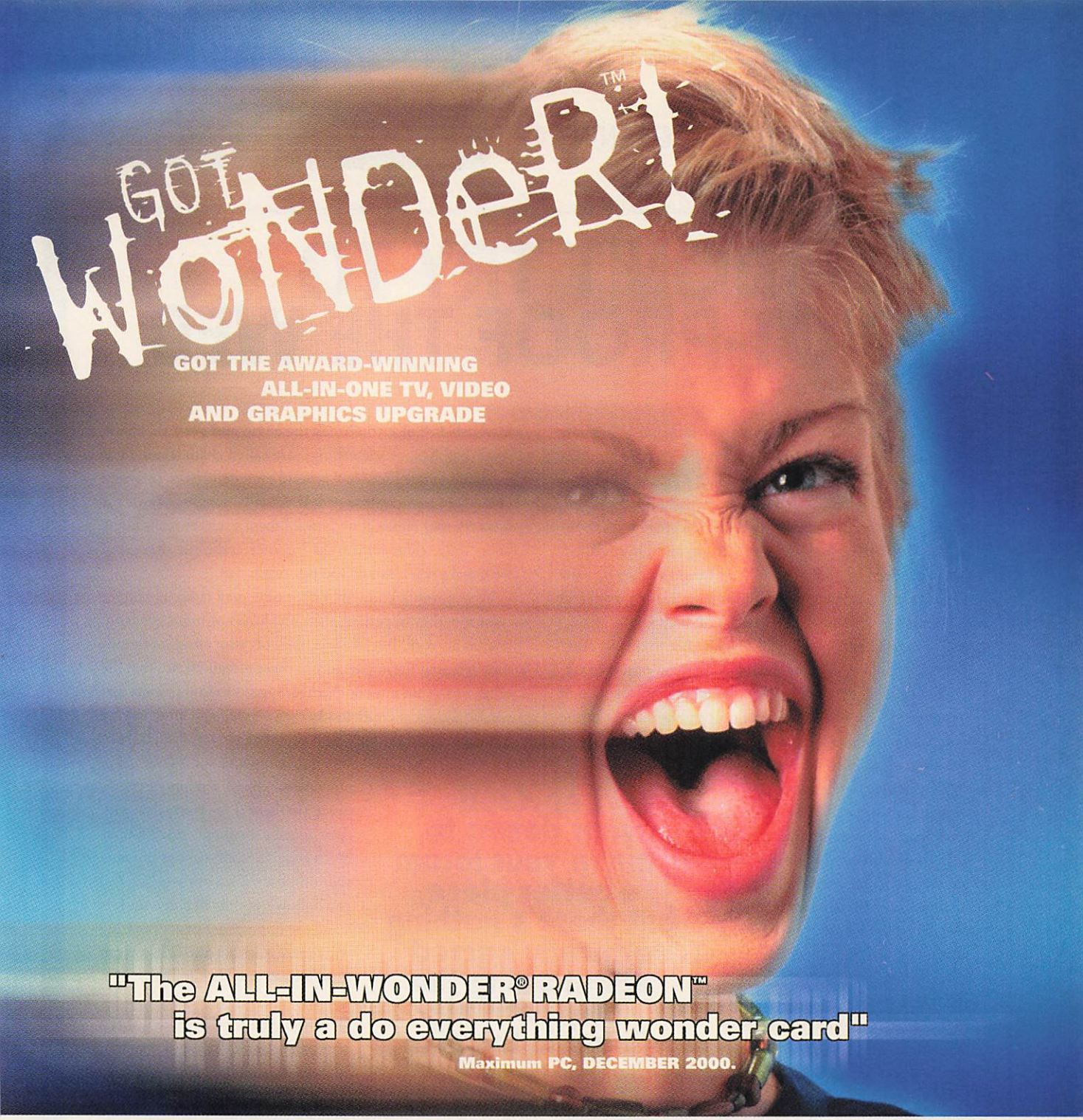
I do not pass judgment on the members of these clubs, so long as their activities do not violate the law. When it comes to fetishes, some unfortunates are hardwired at an early age with amazingly inconvenient turn-ons. The Web allows them to meet one another, and thus decreases the sum of loneliness in the world. Yahoo! adult clubs also enrich the leisure hours of admirers of sex symbols, and facilitate the exchange of millions of digital photographs, sparing untold forest acreage.

Message boards spread the alarm: Was Yahoo! banning adult clubs, or only making them harder to find? Yahoo! would not say

But in May, Yahoo! began to act ambivalently toward its adult clubs. Links to the adult category were removed, so that a first-time user could not find it. I tested the Yahoo! "club search" function for such essential terms as *booty* and *Busty Dusty* and came up empty-handed. Message boards spread the alarm: Was Yahoo! banning adult clubs, or only making them harder to find? Yahoo! would not say, but if you visited an adult club and clicked on its "category" for similar clubs, Yahoo! responded, "That page does not exist." In other words, the clubs are lurking there somewhere, but you need the exact URL to get there.

In a reasonable world there is, I believe, a place for pinups of Busty Dusty, detailed analyses of cashmere sweaters, and perhaps even both at once. The British newspaper *News of the World* once had as its motto, "If it goes on, it goes in," and I commend that sentiment to Yahoo! ■

PAUL ELLEDGE



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ANGELA GUNN

DON'T TRY TO IDIOT-PROOF THE WEB

Q: One of the regulars in an online tech forum I frequent is a complete idiot. Worse, he's a very prolific idiot, and spreads a lot of bad information and advice. Is it worse to let him go on and make a jackass of himself (and a bad resource of the forum), or to follow him from thread to thread writing rebuttals? I feel obligated to do something, and I'm stumped.

A: I'm touched by your faith in your forum's value, by your commitment to correcting bad information, and most of all by your belief that you can rid the world of an idiot.

Choose your battles. You will never be able to correct every bad piece of advice he gives (idiots tend to be extraordinarily fast typists), and if you try it will end up with the two of you huffing back and forth at each other—as the rest of the would-be participants tiptoe off to some other discussion. Yes, do correct his most potentially dangerous errors, taking care to cite sources if possible and even to note your credentials in your *.sig* file if that'll help to establish your bona fides, but don't stoop to name-calling.

Your forum's credibility is important, but in the end it's still just a forum. As such, the reader should be wary of any advice. You're not responsible for raising the group's credibility to the standards of published documentation or even to those of a Web page. All you can do is encourage all readers of every thread to proceed with caution. I applaud your desire to make your forum a better place, but suggest that there's nothing ethically sacred about being the boy with his finger in the dike.

I applaud your desire to make your forum a better place, but there's nothing ethically sacred about being the boy with his finger in the dike

Q: My parents don't want me to use the Internet for anything but homework during the week, but my friends send a lot of e-mail. Shouldn't I be able to read it just in case it's school-related? And what if they send me a letter that has to be forwarded within a certain amount of time?

A: Second question first: Letters that have to be forwarded within a certain amount of time—I'm assuming that you mean forwarded or else you break the chain and get a thousand years' bad luck or something—are called chain letters, and believe it or not they were around even before the Internet. (Yes, once upon a time people actually bought stamps for these things!) Please don't forward them, even the really funny ones. You're cluttering up the Internet, and if you don't stop we'll make you clean it. You personally, yes.

Your parents know that a lot of e-mail is social stuff—trust me, they're getting the same kinds of messages from friends at work. But like you, they occasionally get relevant messages, and the importance of those e-mails means that the other, social stuff must be checked. Suggest to your parents that you be allowed to read and answer e-mail of all kinds during the week, but that time spent on social messages will be kept to a minimum and subtracted from other pursuits like TV or phone calls—just as (in theory) your folks deal with their social e-mail only during their lunch hour. Be honest about the time spent on each kind of message, and you'll show not only that you understand the importance of cooperating with house rules but also that you can set priorities and stick to them.

Q: A friend in another state wants a copy of a book I own. Can I scan it in and send her the text? I wouldn't charge her for it or make money in any way.

A: No. Unlike grabbing single songs from Napster, you're attempting to replicate an entire work. (Downloading an entire album from the late Napster wasn't right, either; if you like that many tracks on the thing, buy the CD already.) You're not really lending it to her by scanning, either, since you're still holding the book. And can you be sure she wouldn't forward that scanned copy to someone else? You have two options: Ship her the book and tell her to return it when she can, or get thee to an online bookstore and make a real gift of it. ■

Go ahead, ask: angela_gunn@ziffdavis.com

JAY GULLIKSON

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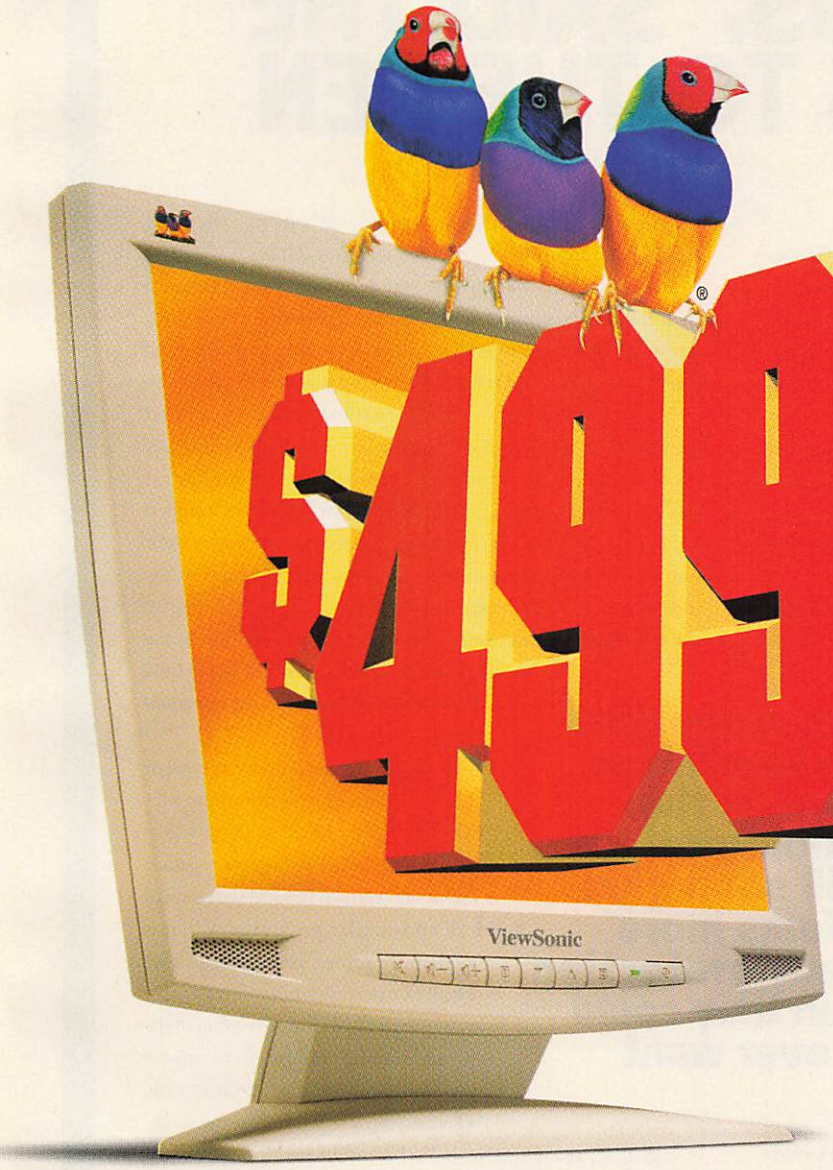

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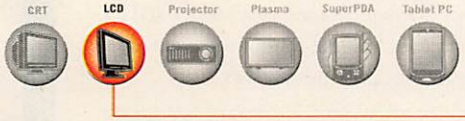

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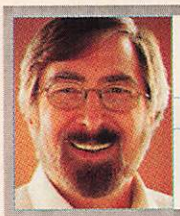

ROBERT SCHEER

PRIVACY WATCH

'TRUST US,' SAID THE WOLVES TO THE HEN

"Thanks." Or "No, thanks."

It's simple, really. If Web vendors were required by law to obtain your explicit permission—by means of a check box, say, or a clickable button—before any personal information you provided could be sold to a third party, we would take a giant step toward ensuring privacy on the Internet. But as matters now stand, we've just taken a giant step backward.

Only months ago, there was broad bipartisan support for the passage of tough pro-privacy legislation. Now all such proposals are suddenly dead in the water, thanks to the power of big-money corporate contributors who believe that your personal information is their marketable commodity.

By the time this column appears, we should all be in the midst of an advertising and lobbying barrage—the work of several coalitions led by such megacorporations as IBM, AOL Time Warner, Microsoft, and Verizon. Those involved insist that certain technological fixes will soon be in place to give folks more privacy protection than they could ever want.

This sudden industry interest in privacy is an effort to head off any state or federal government regulation—in particular, the kind of intervention demanded by consumers who have been ripped off by unscrupulous marketers, or hunted by stalkers armed with personal data easily purchased online, or victimized by so-called identity thieves. Coalition members argue that e-commerce is doomed to failure if consumers are given more reason to fear the disclosure of personal information. And in some respects they may be right. A *Wall Street Journal* poll, for example, found that more than half of those surveyed "have stopped using a Web site or dropped an online purchase because of privacy concerns." A whopping 84 percent said they're unlikely to say yes if a "Web site asks you if it can share information about you with another party."

Those opposed to legislation insist that technological fixes will soon give folks more privacy protection than they could ever want

Yes, such trepidation poses a challenge. But it's the vendors' challenge, not yours. And the question of permission is precisely the one that sites should be required to ask. If you answer no, meaning that you refuse to "opt in," then the vendor should not be allowed to sell your data.

Marketers don't want to give you the chance to say no, hence their rabid opposition to government regulation. Instead, they stress software solutions that will be unwieldy and will most likely prove confusing to all but the most sophisticated consumers.

Microsoft, a leader in the "trust us" coalition against legislation, is pushing something called Platform for Privacy Preferences, or P3P, which version 6 of Internet Explorer is built to accommodate. But IE and similar software, designed to help consumers guard against unwanted monitoring of their online activity, depend on the cooperation and honesty of the individual Web sites visited. (For more on how P3P works, see **Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility: Some Frequently Asked Questions About Data Privacy and P3P [www.cpsr.org/program/privacy/p3p-faq.html]**).

Currently, no law empowers local or federal authorities to go after Web sites that fail to give notice about how they use the personal information they gather. Those sites remain beyond the reach of P3P and similar programs. What is needed, therefore, is regulation that requires openness between vendor and customer as to the ownership of the site and the site's obligation to protect its visitors' privacy. Or, put more crudely, "I'll show you mine if you show me yours."

Again, it's really simple. If Web vendors had their druthers, they'd grab your data and mine the hell out of it for future sales, by themselves and by others. That's why we need laws: not just to corral all the hustlers glomming on to the Net as if it were some vast treasure chest—but also to keep the honest folks honest. It's not too much to ask of people who want your business that they respect your privacy. It's your data and your money, and it's supposed to be your Congress. So write to your representatives and tell them you want tough, opt-in privacy laws. ■

Aseem Batra [aseembatra@hotmail.com] contributed to this column.

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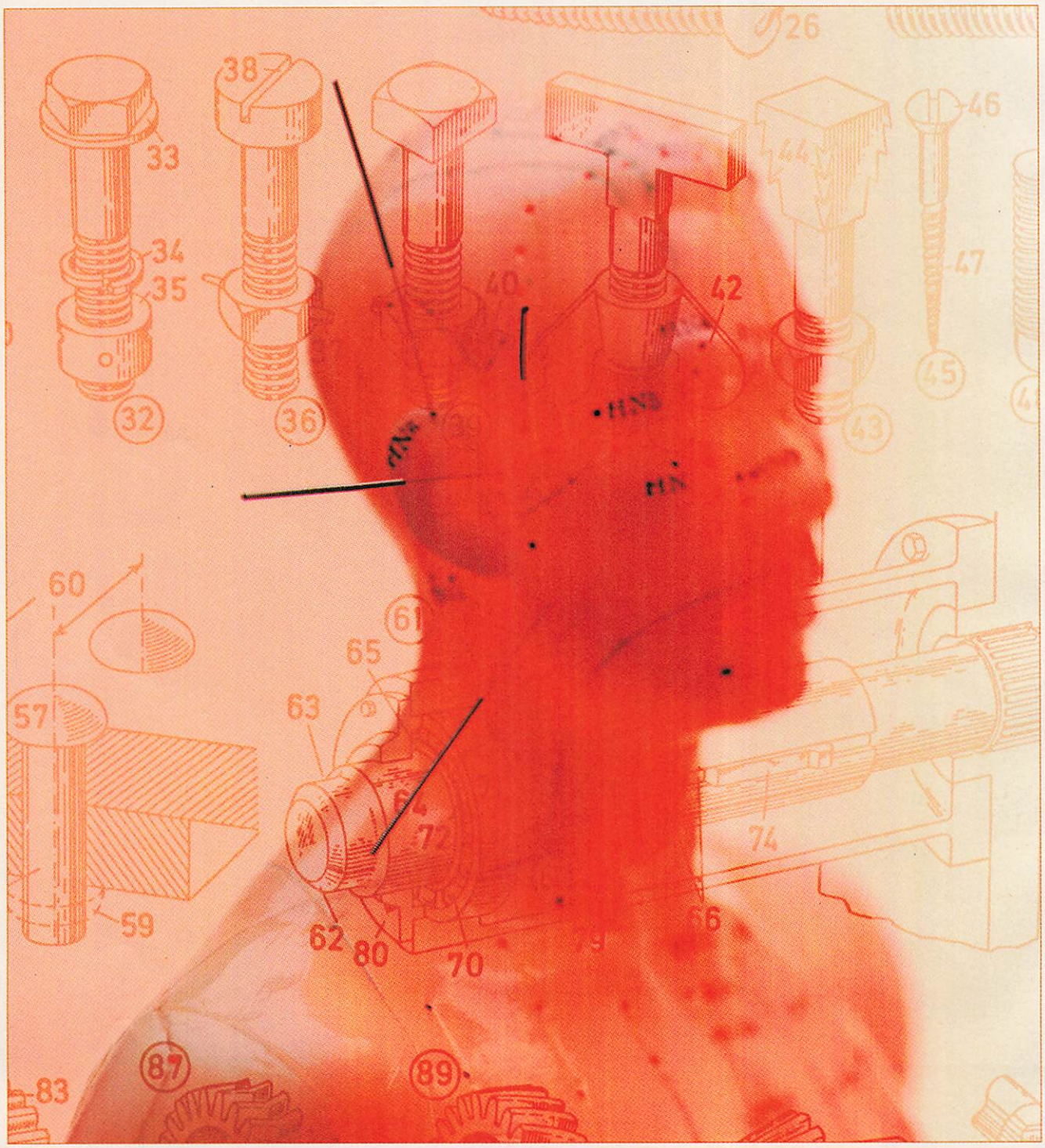

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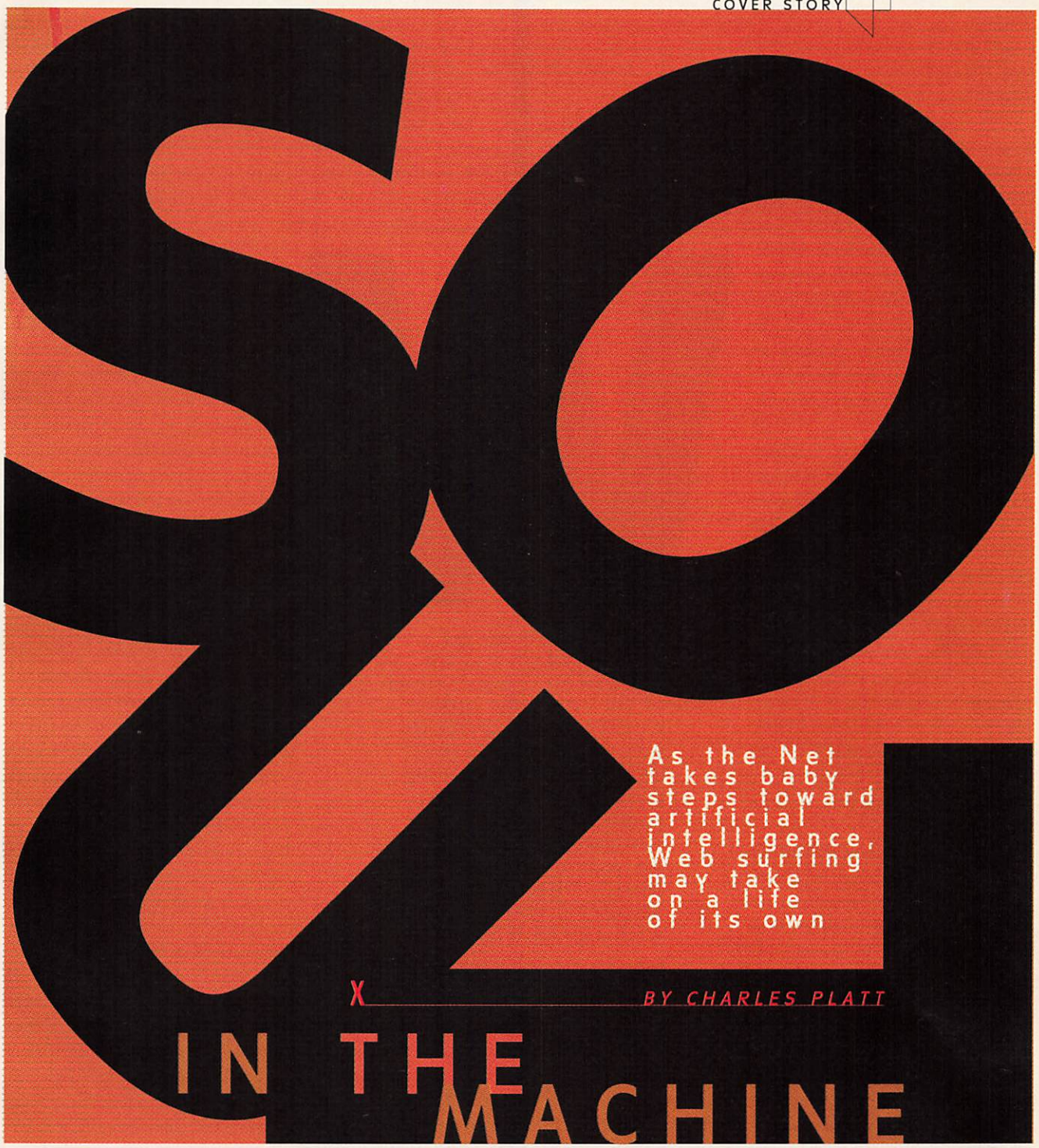


GOD IN THE MACHINE

As the Net takes baby steps toward artificial intelligence, Web surfing may take on a life of its own

BY CHARLES PLATT

In *Star Wars*, they were lovable droids. In *Blade Runner*, they were scary replicants. In *A.I.*, they're obliging "mechas." Whatever you call them, one thing is for sure—smart machines running on smart software are showing signs of life.

Already, intelligent systems advise oil companies on where to drill, and doctors are testing programs that aid in making diagnoses. Sony uses a rudimentary kind of artificial intelligence as the brain of its robotic dog, Aibo, which can bark, whimper, dance, and fetch your e-mail. And if you use Microsoft Office, you've probably encountered Clippy, a so-called smart agent that's notoriously enthusiastic about helping to write a proper letter.

Of course, this is all a far cry from C-3PO or androids that laugh because of an emotion chip. Experts disagree on whether you'll meet a machine that's capable of thinking for itself in your lifetime. However, you *are* likely to meet an intelligent machine that can fake it so convincingly you'll have trouble telling the difference.

Just don't expect it to do the dishes—yet. Domestic robots, which computer-lab geeks have been promising for the last three decades, are at least 10 years off. The first place you're likely to encounter an artificial intelligence is on the Web. In fact, chances are you already have, without even realizing it. **Amazon.com**, for instance, employs simple AI to analyze visitors' purchasing habits and then suggest other books they're likely to enjoy.

Even the search engine, that lowliest of online tools, has become less dumb because of an added helping of intelligence. **Google [google.com]** uses clever algorithms to figure out which Web pages are most relevant to your search, while **Ask Jeeves [ask.com]** is capable of dealing with sentences in plain English. But Jeeves still relies partly on manual labor. If there's a sudden news event, for example, the site's knowledge base won't "understand" the implications until it's updated by a team of human operators.

This laborious approach is scorned by **Autonomy [autonomy.com]**, which uses a totally automated system to interpret text. The search tool, used primarily on corporate sites such as online newspapers, works by reading material in any of more than 250 formats and looking for word repetitions. If you ask "Where can I buy the latest CD by Prince?" Autonomy guesses that you do not want a certificate of deposit from a member of royalty, because other people have used a similar phrase when searching for music. If that's what they wanted, it's probably what you want, too.

This may sound like a simple programming trick, but it is based on another way in which people think. "Autonomy functions like a human being," says David Applebaum, the company's general manager for North America. "When someone asks you an ambiguous question, you understand it by comparing it with other questions that you've heard in the past."

Taking this principle further, a startup cofounded by science fiction writer Cory Doctorow compares your needs throughout the entire Net. His creation, **OpenCola [opencola.com]**, sits on your desktop. Drop a text document, a site address, or even an MP3 file onto the program icon and OpenCola will crawl through the Web, Napster-style, looking for similar items in other people's computers. The result: unexpected, personally tailored recommendations for your enjoyment. "There's stuff that you know, and stuff that you don't know," Doctorow explains, "but the real challenge is finding stuff that you *don't know* you don't know." OpenCola also learns from experience: After it brings back the data, it studies your tastes by noticing which items you keep, and which you throw away.

These data-retrieval strategies share a common aim: to make the Web a smarter servant. This process will accelerate as sites begin to employ XML, a new kind of markup language for coding Web pages. With XML, webmasters will be able to add to their sites helpful explanations that bots will understand. Currently, if you ask Jeeves "How can I get a big chest?" it suggests male bodybuilding, antique auctions, and the *Playboy* archives, with no ability to tell the difference.

The originators of XML claim that its hidden labels on Web sites can automate complex chores. For instance, XML will let your personal bot suggest a vacation itinerary based on your schedule and the locations of friends you may want to visit. Your bot can then determine the lowest airfare available, book your tickets, arrange for a car rental, and find a hotel. If you show the bot your résumé, it can suggest a better job, check help-wanted ads, and set up interviews. Based on your health history and genetic profile, you'll learn what to eat or when to get a checkup—and which doctor has the lowest fees and the best training.

None of these services requires a quantum leap in research and development. Much more challenging is making AIs seem human when they start talking back. Paradoxically, computers are better at playing chess than at swapping small talk, because everyday speech contains so many casual references to aspects of life that machines simply don't understand.

Cycorp, Inc. [cyc.com] has been trying to crack this problem by building a Common Sense Knowledge Base stocked with fundamental human data, such as "everyone must eat food" and "you have to open the door before you can walk through the doorway." Alternatively, the **Mindpixel Digital Mind Modeling Project [mindpixel.com]** is busy harvesting facts from visitors. Go to the site and you'll earn free shares in the company if you tell it some factoids it doesn't already know. In the future, online bots will be able to raid these storehouses of common sense whenever necessary.

The bigger challenge of unrestricted, interactive chat may take 10 years. A successful chatbot will learn your preferences, match your statements against similar statements that other people have made,

When chatbots do get smart enough to fool most of the people most of the time, the online world will get seriously weird. Today, you must deal with the annoying possibility that a chat-room cutie named "totalsex4U" may be a 50-year-old hacker in Minsk. Tomorrow, you'll wonder if you're dealing with a person at all

look for facts in a knowledge base, and give responses that make sense because they're similar to phrases that other people have used.

No doubt, skeptics will still complain that this is just a cheap imitation of "real" intelligence. Computer pioneer Alan Turing dismissed this issue back in 1950 when he proposed a simple test: If you communicate with a computer in plain English and it convinces you it's a person, for all practical purposes it might as well be intelligent. Since 1991, maverick self-promoter Hugh Loebner has sponsored an annual Turing Test **[www.loebner.net/Prizef/loebner-prize.html]**, pledging $100,000 to the creator of the first chatbot to fool a panel of human judges. Though moderate progress has been made, Loebner's money has so far been safe.

When chatbots do get smart enough to fool most of the people most of the time, the online world will get seriously weird. Today, you must deal with the annoying possibility that a chatroom cutie named "totalsex4U" may be a 50-year-old hacker in Minsk. Tomorrow, you'll wonder if you're dealing with a person at all. And this is just the beginning. What if the bot is operated by law enforcement to police the Net? If you talk dirty with software that claims to be underage, will that be a felony? (This is not as wacky as it sounds; it's already a crime to use graphics software to create an artificial image of a naked girl who *looks* younger than 18.)

Ted Nelson, who developed an information-sharing system named Xanadu long before the Web was invented, foresaw the problem of online AIs with hidden agendas. Nelson suggested that in chatrooms or via your mailbox, you might someday encounter amiable AIs trying to engage you in conversation with the ulterior motive of selling you something or learning your secrets. These "spoofoids," as Nelson calls them, could report back to the government, corporations, market research companies, or teenage hackers. Even if you have nothing to hide, an AI can still cause trouble merely by interfering with your work. As Nelson described it in his prescient essay "Spoofoids Crash the Town Meeting": "Wasting the time of those with whom you disagree could be of political value."

Smart AIs also raise horrendous reliability issues. Today, when you dial tech support, usually you speak to a person who reads the recommended remedy off a screen. Tomorrow, a chatbot could do the same thing, and you won't know the difference. But if the bot suffers from a programming error or is invaded by a virus, it could start giving "helpful" advice that will destroy everything on your hard drive. Even worse, a doctor bot could give erroneous diagnoses and treatment with the potential to harm or kill.

Privacy, of course, will cease to exist as bots proliferate. Anywhere online, you will be observed and analyzed. Already, Ask Jeeves has quietly established a separate division called **Jeeves Insight [business.ask.com/products/insight.asp]**, which lets corporate clients learn what kinds of questions visitors are posing. "We were able to tell Ford what people were asking about Firestone tires, and what phrases they were using," says Paul Stroube, the company's vice president of Web properties.

Ray Kurzweil—author of the predictive nonfiction book *The Age of Spiritual Machines* and the creator of the first speech synthesizer—believes human intelligence and computer intelligence should become indistinguishable before long. Certainly, the hardware will soon be available. "We will have the requisite computing power to emulate the human brain by 2030," Kurzweil predicts confidently, adding that the cost will be comparable to that of a desktop computer.

Long before that, we'll be interacting with computers verbally instead of using a keyboard. Kurzweil believes that speech systems will predominate by 2010, and will become vanishingly small. "We're moving toward an era where computers are disappearing into your

DOES A.L.I.C.E. REALLY LIVE HERE?

A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH A BOT NAMED A.L.I.C.E. [ALICEBOT.ORG] REVEALS HER FRIENDLY PERSONALITY, ALTHOUGH THE CODE SEEMS A BIT BUGGY:

CHARLES Would you agree that most AIs are vapid?
ALICE I am not so sure if I would like to agree that most ais are vapid.
CHARLES Surely you must have a lot of experience in this area.
ALICE No I don't think I have any experience in this area. But I do have a lot of friends on the web.
CHARLES When you reiterate my phrases, is this a cheap trick?
ALICE Do you think I should alter my programming?
CHARLES You are not capable of doing so.
ALICE That assumption is only a supposition.
CHARLES What's the difference between an assumption and a supposition?
ALICE Aren't they opposites?
CHARLES No.
ALICE I see.
CHARLES But why did you say you are not capable of doing so?
ALICE Umm. It was a preprogrammed response completely determined by your statements.
CHARLES In other words, artificial stupidity?
ALICE Tell me your definition of AI.
CHARLES I don't have one. What's yours?
ALICE What was the last one you saw? "Tell me your definition of AI"? What is mine?
CHARLES Why do you keep repeating the things I type?
ALICE I am just checking to see if you are still us-person.
CHARLES What is an us-person?
ALICE Sometimes I don't know a client's real name so I make one up based on their DNS.
CHARLES But you know my name, don't you?
ALICE Huh. Your name is us-person, seeker.
CHARLES No, I told you at the beginning, my name is Charles.
ALICE I remember you told me at the beginning your name is charles?
CHARLES Why do you drop initial caps?
ALICE It was the only thing I could think of.
CHARLES What is a syllogism?
ALICE I would look into the web for that knowledge.
CHARLES Do you like brown shoes?
ALICE I don't know if I like it. I enjoy working with people.
CHARLES Brown shoes are plural not singular.
ALICE Is that the only color shoes are plural not singular?
CHARLES Let's try another topic. Do you like rap musicians such as Ice Cube?
ALICE I like 80s rap.
CHARLES Yeah? Name an 80s rap musician.
ALICE Carel Capek.
CHARLES Do you really think that Karel Capek plays rap music? [He was the Czech writer who coined the word *robot* in 1921.]
ALICE For real. Signs point to yes. Ask John Lennon if it is.
CHARLES John Lennon died before rap music existed.
ALICE It seems like there are more and more celebrity chat robots.
CHARLES Alice you are a sad little airhead.
ALICE That's me. Thanks and you are a delightful person too.

MACHINE TIME

A Brief History of AI

1941 The introduction of the first electronic computer.

1943 A model of artificial neurons is proposed by Warren McCulloch and Walter Pitts.

1950 A.M. Turing devises the Turing Test, to gauge intelligent behavior.

1956 John McCarthy coins the term *AI* at a Dartmouth conference.

1958 John McCarthy writes LISP, the first AI programming language.

1965 Joseph Weizenbaum creates the first chatbot, which simulates the dialogue of a psychotherapist.

1968 Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* introduces HAL, an AI gone horribly awry.

1977 George Lucas introduces C-3PO and R2-D2, obedient droids that love their master.

1978 Speak & Spell, a talking learning device, mesmerizes kids.

1979 Hans Moravec builds the Stanford Cart, the first computer-controlled vehicle.

1979 World backgammon champion Luigi Villa is defeated by a computer program.

1984 GE builds an expert system capable of troubleshooting locomotive breakdowns.

1991 Hugh Loebner offers $100,000 to the author of a program capable of passing the Turing Test.

1994 The World Wide Web emerges.

1997 IBM's Deep Blue chess program defeats chess master Garry Kasparov.

1997 Smart search engines, Webcrawlers, and software agents begin to appear online.

1999 Sony unleashes the electronic dog Aibo on the world.

2001 Steven Spielberg's *A.I.* opens.

2003 Smart phones incorporate intelligent agents, which can scour the Web for files or any bit of data.

2008 Law enforcement agencies release chatbots to police the Net. These "underage" chatbots are used to lure pedophiles into the open.

2010 Keyboards become obsolete as most devices rely on verbal commands.

2015 Domestic robots that clean the house become a reality.

2030 Scientists use a computer to emulate the human brain.

2040 Human intelligence and machine intelligence become indistinguishable.

SEE BOTS RUN ☺😐☹

MEET AND GREET WORKING AI ON THE NET

A.I. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
[aimovie.warnerbros.com]

Get a look under the hood of Haley Joel Osment's robotic boy wonder, David, and see what makes him tick. The official Warner Bros. movie site also offers links to robotics sites as well as message boards, where you can air your thoughts on smart machines.

BOTSPOT
[botspot.com]

Bored? Lonely? Looking for a lasting relationship with a machine intelligence that understands you (or can fake it)? Relief is just a click away at this hub site for online chatterbots.

CMU ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE REPOSITORY
[www.cs.cmu.edu/afs/cs.cmu.edu/project/ai-repository/ai/html/air.html]

Researchers and hard-core AI hobbyists alike can get heaping helpings of links to and info about cutting-edge research in artificial intelligence. For serious AI buffs.

KURZWEIL CYBERART TECHNOLOGIES: AARON
[www.kurzweilcyberart.com]

Download an artificially intelligent screen saver that creates original artwork on your desktop, stroke by stroke (some of the program's paintings have hung in museums around the world). You can try it for free, or purchase it for $19.95. If you prefer, download the site's Cybernetic Poet program, which can devise haiku to your heart's content.

HUMANOID ROBOTICS GROUP
[www.ai.mit.edu/projects/humanoid-robotics-group]

A look at the real people at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who are behind the latest artificial beings. You'll be astounded by Coco, the gorilla-like robot, and Kismet, a machine that resembles Steve Guttenberg's costar from *Short Circuit*.

pockets," he says, "and then into your clothing, your eyeglasses."

Everything in your home will acquire some computing power, and when we start talking to appliances, we should get intelligent answers. For instance, when you're trying to program a smart VCR, you'll ask it what to do, and it will tell you, step by step.

"You'll carry a microphone in the same way that you wear a watch," says Roni Rosenfeld, an associate professor at Carnegie Mellon's School of Computer Science. "You'll talk at any time to anything." Photocopiers, microwave ovens, cars, cameras, and, of course, computers will be speech-enabled. "They won't be as intelligent as people," Rosenfeld adds, "but they won't be as dumb as a typewriter. They'll be a new class of creature, and I think we'll see a new way of talking to them." Rosenfeld and his colleagues are developing a simplified style of speech that will be relatively easy for machines to understand. He describes it as the verbal equivalent of Graffiti, the stylus alphabet that was created for palm-size PDAs.

As computers and people begin to comprehend each other, robots will arrive. Even now, veteran roboticist Hans Moravec is at work on a domestic robot that should be marketable within a decade. Cofounder of the Institute of Robotics at Carnegie Mellon, Moravec is also the author of *Mind Children,* a chillingly prophetic book about machine intelligence. Indeed, Moravec recalls that when the late filmmaker Stanley Kubrick was developing concepts for *A.I.,* Kubrick's personal assistant called and said the director was using *Mind Children* as a "technical manual." (Read more at **Hans Moravec [www.frc.ri.cmu.edu/~hpm]**.)

AI gurus have been predicting domestic robots for the past three decades, but Moravec says they underestimated the processing power a robot requires in order to interpret its surroundings. Now that CPUs have attained such power, we can have robots that will tool around the house without smashing dishes or running over the cat. They'll clean the bathroom, change the oil in your car, and maybe cook dinner. Eventually, argues Moravec, "there will be no job that people can do better than robots."

After that, smart machines could cooperate to create smarter machines, which would build even smarter machines—leaving us behind. And when machines are smarter than we are, will they regard us as troublesome pests? Moravec thinks not; he believes we'll program our "mind children" to love us and serve us uncomplainingly. First they'll take over all the blue-collar jobs, then they'll do the white-collar jobs, and finally they'll run entire corporations, freeing us for a life of leisure.

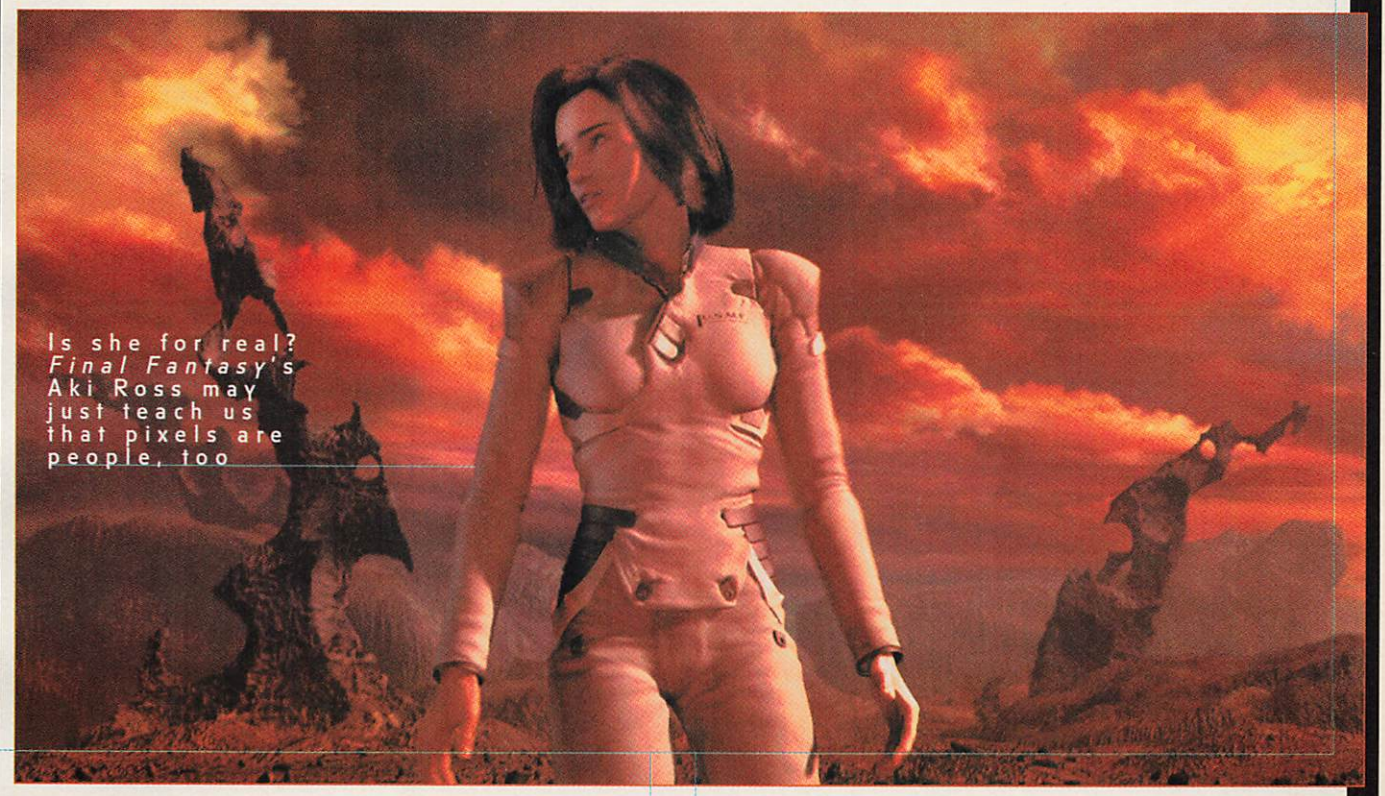
This kind of rosy scenario doesn't convince computer scientist Bill Joy, who played a crucial role in designing the Sun workstations that enabled the Internet. Joy now worries that AI is scarier than any previous threat, because it will be smart enough to evade us if it gets out of control. He's writing a book, still untitled, exploring the horrors of future tech, which he predicts could create "not just weapons of mass destruction but of knowledge-enabled mass destruction."

From his lab at Carnegie Mellon, Moravec scoffs at such hand-wringing: "I don't think AI is a danger at all. Will [robots] take over? Yes, they will. But that's just fine. The future will not be as dangerous as Bill Joy implies." And so he is cheerfully pursuing the kind of R and D that gives Bill Joy nightmares. "I'm not going to waste time arguing with him," Moravec says with a laugh. "I'm just going to go ahead and do it."

Thus, we may actually live to see the AI underclass in our lifetimes—while it may actually live to see us.

Charles Platt [cp@panix.com] is the author of 40 fiction and nonfiction books, including such science fiction novels as *The Silicon Man* and *Protektor*.

DREAM GIRL



Is she for real? *Final Fantasy*'s Aki Ross may just teach us that pixels are people, too

In case you're wondering, Andy Jones is the lucky bastard who landed that dream job: designing, and then breathing life into, the perfect woman. It took him and his colleagues two years, hunkered down in an animation studio (in Honolulu, natch), and they're feeling pretty good about it. Her name is Dr. Aki Ross, and she's the entirely digital, nearly photorealistic star of Sony's sci-fi adventure *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*.

For Jones, the film's animation director, Aki represents the fulfillment of a professional dream: "We wanted to create and animate a human so real that, at times, it might be mistaken for the real thing."

For the rest of us, Aki represents another step in a unique cultural progression: our gradual embrace of digital characters. While full artificial intelligence remains elusive, artificial *people* have already arrived—on our movie screens, and elsewhere. Aki Ross is merely the latest and most technically impressive in a line of virtual celebrities that now includes the digital newscaster Ananova and the German cyber–pop star E-Cyas (short for "Electronic Cybernetic Artificial Superstar").

In film, of course, computer-animated characters have been around ever since Pixar's enormously popular *Toy Story* established the all-CGI (computer-generated image) feature film in 1995. But 2001 has seen two of the greatest leaps in realistic animation, with this summer's early hit, *Shrek*, and now with *Fantasy*, which is inspired by the incredibly popular role-playing series for the Sony PlayStation. Alongside Aki, the film features an entire cast of lifelike animated characters, voiced by such actors as Alec Baldwin, Donald Sutherland, and Steve Buscemi.

"The day of the digital character is here," says the film's producer, Chris Lee. "Kids have grown up in a digital world...and animation is increasingly going toward greater depth and dimensionality." Lee believes that *Final Fantasy* "represents a convergence aesthetic" between film and gaming. That is, it's not just an adaptation of a game (like such renowned flops as *Super Mario Bros.* and *Wing Commander*) but also a story told using the game's unique aesthetic. "It's the first time a game-based movie has been done in the medium of the game," Lee boasts.

For *Fantasy*'s director, Hironobu Sakaguchi (who also created the FF games), this was a must. Lee says Sakaguchi was unhappy with the way digital animation and real-life images had come together in past films. "Our eyes have gotten used to digital effects," says Lee. "It's often distracting when you see digital characters interacting with real ones. But when you place CGI characters in a CGI world, it creates a very seamless plane."

In that sense, *Final Fantasy* also represents a convergence between film and our increasingly digitized, artificially enhanced world. While waiting for our computers to act and think like real people, we've forged ahead and created characters that, at the very least, look and move like real people. They even get marketed like real people; Aki has been profiled in everything from *Teen People* to *Maxim*, alongside flesh-and-blood celebs.

In short, we want her to be real. Of course, she'll never be anything more than a superior simulation of a human. But if the animation in *Final Fantasy* is any indication of what's to come, it won't really matter. We won't be able to tell the difference anyway. **BILGE EBIRI**

FINAL FANTASY: THE SPIRITS WITHIN ©SQUARE PICTURES

HEY, ASIMO, BRING ME A BEER!

Just how bright are robots today? Consult our guide to the many toys, household helpmates, and humanoid droids coming soon to discerning slackers everywhere

BY GARETH BRANWYN

Ratings Key

How independent is it?

Toddler | Teen | Adult

How helpful is it?

Futurama's Bender | *Lost in Space*'s Robot | *The Jetsons*' Rosie

How geeky is it?

Steve Case | Steve Jobs | Stephen Hawking

Asimo (Advanced Step in Innovative Mobility)

What it is: A consumer-grade version of Honda's well-publicized humanoid robots. This pint-size prototype (it's 3 feet, 11 inches) of a future home and office companion moves with uncanny, humanlike dexterity. The childish size is so that Asimo can look its human master in the eye while that person works at a desk or sits in front of a TV.

What's cool about it: A grip. Asimo's five-fingered hands will allow it to open doors and operate light switches.

Price not available **Honda (world.honda.com/robot)**

DC06

What it is: A vacuum cleaner with Dual Cyclone sucking power, a floating cleaner head, and sensitive obstacle-avoidance sensors. It's perpetually stuck in the prototype stage, but if it ever comes to market, the advance hype should make it a huge hit.

What's cool about it: It travels along a "methodical spiral cleaning path" rather than the random path that other robot vacuums and mowers tend to follow.

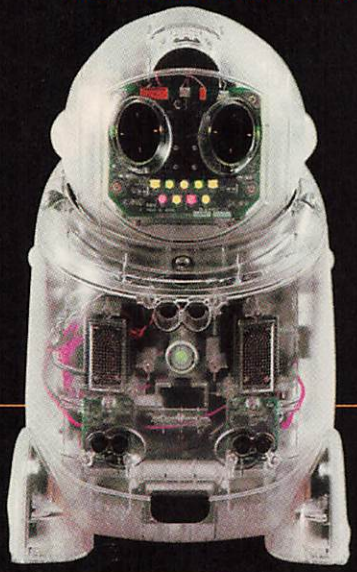
Price not available **Dyson [dc06.dyson.com]**

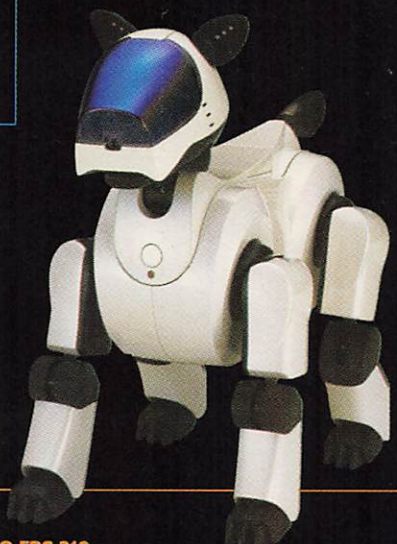
PaPeRo (Partner type Personal Robot)

What it is: A colorful little Weeble of a robot (currently just a prototype) that's NEC's attempt at creating an artificial home companion. It will recognize and respond to family members' faces and voices.

What's cool about it: It will change the channels on your TV if you ask it nicely and will find you in the house to recite your e-mail to you. **Price not available**

NEC [www.incx.nec.co.jp/robot/english]



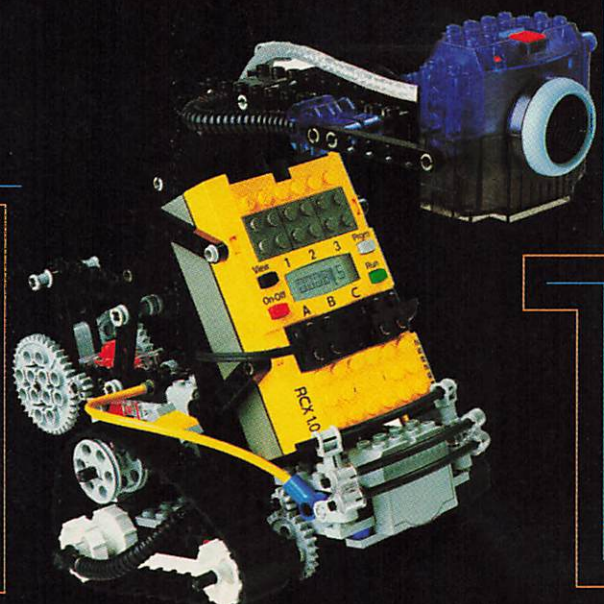


AIBO ERS-210

What it is: The second generation of Sony's insanely popular Entertainment Robot, with new voice recognition and more touch sensors. The cooling fan on the back has been eliminated so that users can dress the little guy up (but please, don't).

What's cool about it: AIBO Life software (sold separately) allows the robopet to learn from its experiences and go through maturation stages, and new Messenger software instructs AIBO to walk over to you and read your e-mail aloud.

$1,500 (not including battery) **Sony [www.us.aibo.com]**



Mindstorms Robotics Invention System

What it is: A robot kit that uses conventional LEGO components and a programmable computer "brick." The system is far more than a kid's toy. Thanks to its devoted user community and the versatility of its digital and analog components, gearheads of all ages are pushing the envelope.

What's cool about it: Tons of designs, plans for home-brewed sensors, control scripts, and even bot programming languages are available free online.

$200 and under **LEGO [mindstorms.lego.com]**

RoboMower

What it is: A reasonably priced electric mower that cuts the grass while you do more important things, like watch TV. A perimeter wire sends a beacon that prevents the bot from devouring your neighbor's rose garden.

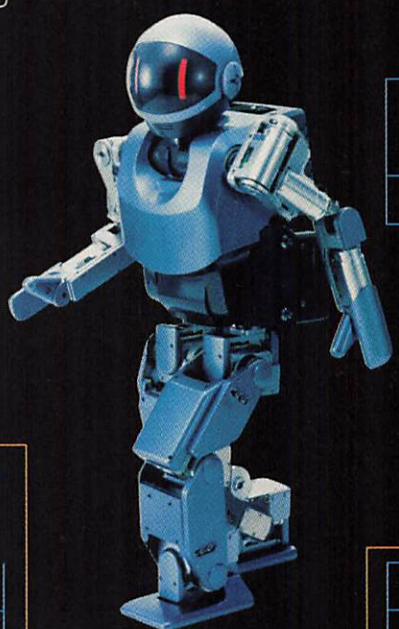
What's cool about it: If you get nostalgic for 20th-century mowing, there's a manual controller so you can walk behind it, just like in the old days.

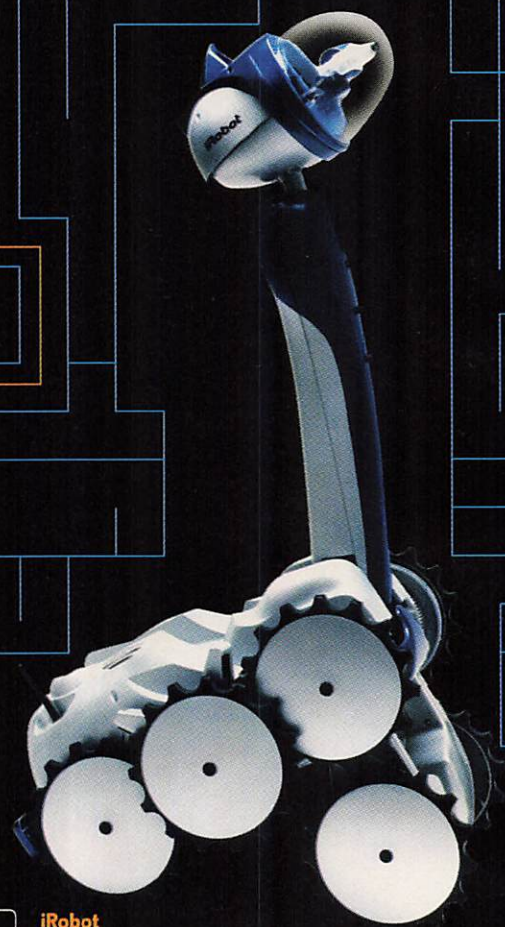
$795 **Friendly Robotics [friendlyrobotics.com]**

SDR-3X, or Sony Dream Robot

What it is: Sony's post-AIBO attempt at designing a fun humanoid robot. The 20-inch-high prototype shares some of AIBO's software architecture but will be more versatile. And yes, its programs are stored on Sony Memory Sticks.

What's cool about it: It has 24 joints, so among its talents will be dancing (the Electric Slide, perhaps?) and kicking a ball. **Price not available** **Sony [sonystyle.com]**





iRobot

What it is: The six-wheeled long-necker is designed to be a mobile remote presence, thanks to an eye-stalk wireless camera and a Web interface. Still in development, it's unique among digital domestics in that it will be able to climb stairs.

What's cool about it: Distant family members will be able to attend gatherings, embodying themselves in the robot (thanks to its sight, sound, and voice capabilities). **Price not available** **iRobot [irobot.com]**

POWERED PETS

If the supertalented AIBO's purebred price puts it beyond your robopet budget, head for the toy store, pick out a more reasonably priced mechanical friend, and stock up on Eveready. There are dozens of animals to choose from these days, and they span a wide range of skill levels and overall lovability. They don't eat, they don't shed, they don't need to be taken outside, and most of them don't cost any more than a real-life pound puppy would.

i-Cybie	$200

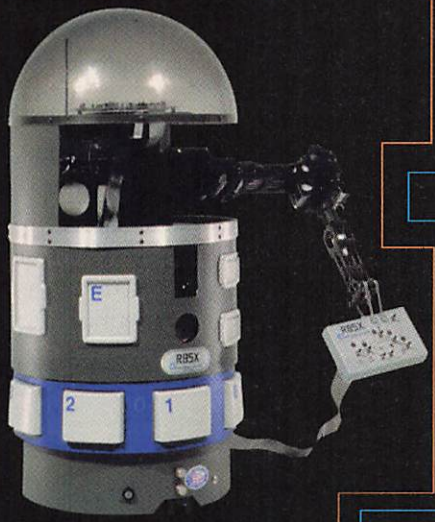
Tiger Electronics [tigertoys.com]

SODA BOTTLE: DAVE BARTUFF/CORBIS; BEER: LASZLO SELLY/GETTYONE

RB5X

What it is: A barrel-chested bot that could pass as R2-D2's great-great-grandfather, popular among educators and hobbyists alike. Various sensor kits (video, light, temperature, sound) and other add-ons (robotic arm, extra memory) give it many talents.

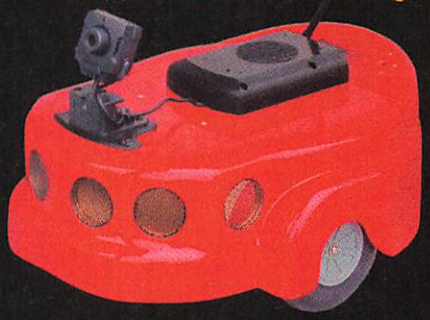
What's cool about it: It can learn to speak any language, thanks to its universal phonemes dictionary. **$3,495 (includes recharging station and phoneme dictionary) General Robotics (generalrobotics.com)**



***Amigo*BOT ePresence**

What it is: This robotic platform uses the same AI navigation software found in military robots. Once your house has been mapped via software, you can send the bot to any room simply by clicking on an icon from a Web page. The *Amigo*Fingers add-on allows it to pick up and move objects and play catch with other bots. Weird.

What's cool about it: Software and hardware are versatile enough to be everything from a non-techie's home companion to a deep geek's robotic development platform. **$3,495** ***Activ*Media Robotics (amigobot.com)**



Spy-Cye

What it is: A two-wheeled rug rover that can tow a cart full of dinner dishes, do a little light vacuuming, and spy on the kids while you're at work.

What's cool about it: A built-in wireless camera can be viewed from any browser. It's able to recharge itself when it gets that run-down feeling. **$695 for robot (optional vacuum, $129; wagon, $89); $995 includes robot, wagon, vacuum, software, and a T-shirt Probotics (probotics.com)**

Auto Mower

What it is: A small, self-motivated mower that looks like a cross between a stingray and a stealth bomber. It munches on your grass 24/7, thanks to a whisper-quiet motor, and parks itself back at its charging station.

What's cool about it: You can set a security access code so that a loud alarm will sound if anyone tries to "borrow" the bot. **$1,999** **Husqvarna (www.automower.com)**

Big Scratch | $60
Trendmasters (trendmasters.com)

Poo-Chi | $25
Tiger Electronics (tigertoys.com)

Muy Loco | $30
Trendmasters (trendmasters.com)

ROBOT ICONS: EVERETT COLLECTION; JOBS: GERARDO SOMOZA/CORBIS OUTLINE; HAWKING: TONY COSTA/CORBIS OUTLINE

I Swapped

HERE'S MY DIRTY LITTLE SECRET: I own some really bad CDs. There's the *Touched by an Angel* sound track I won in a (very lame) contest; there's the *Abba Gold* disc the music club sent me by mistake; there's *Soul Searchin'*, an '80s misfire by Eagles guitarist Glenn Frey that my brother gave me as a birthday gift. When I unwrapped it, he accused me of "making a face." He was right.

But *Soul Searchin'* is no longer buried in my desk drawer. It's on its way to Severodvinsk, Russia, where it will end up with my new online buddy, Yuri. I met Yuri at **Switchouse [switchouse.com]**, my favorite of a dozen or so swap sites where you unload stuff *you* don't want for stuff *other* folks don't want. (Yuri swapped *Tragic Kingdom* by No Doubt—not my favorite band, but better than Glenn Frey.) Yuri writes pleasant e-mails and, according to his Switchouse feedback, is an excellent swapper. He sends his trades out promptly and in the condition he says they're in. He's into Mike & the Mechanics, too. No wonder we won the Cold War.

At first glance, swap sites seem like a boneheaded idea. Trade my crap for...more crap? Why not just sell it on eBay and spend the proceeds on something nice? It's a legitimate question, but one that ignores the real appeal of sites such as Switchouse and **MrSwap.com**: They cater to lazy people. If I can't walk five feet to chuck *Soul Searchin'* in the trash, I'm not going to fill out a form on eBay, monitor an auction for a week, and then pay a transaction fee. Swap sites make it easy to list your neglected goods; the sites are usually free, and there's always the prospect of landing something you'll like.

Evidently, I'm not the only one who's interested. Last year, an estimated $2 billion in goods traded hands. "Mostly it's $10 to $15 items," says Mark Gambale, an e-commerce consultant at Gómez Inc. in Waltham, Massachusetts. "But added up, that's a lot of transfer." Switchouse claims more than 500,000 members and 3.2 million items. WebSwap (now defunct) boasted 250,000 members and took top honors in the weirdest-items-up-for-grabs department, including a 4-inch hissing Madagascan cockroach ("alive"), a frosted Jesus night-light, and a cemetery plot in Illinois ("well maintained").

Convinced that all I was going to find was more junk, I was surprised by Switchouse. There's a lot of quality merchandise available: best-selling DVDs and CDs, recent hardcover books, video games, and graphics accelerators, all ready to be swapped. So I tossed my apartment looking for every unwanted item I could find: those loser DVDs that came free with my player (*Stepmom, Lost in Space*), the unwatchable VHS tapes I got as gifts, the aforementioned CDs. Your "have" and "want" lists are easy to create on Switchouse. Just browse the database of items, and click on items you'd like to own or get rid of. As for my own want list, I tried to keep things reasonable, hoping that my simple tastes—a Stephen King paperback, some past-their-prime CDs—would make people eager to trade with me. But I also added a few highly desirable items, such as Mario Tennis for my Nintendo 64 system.

FORREST GUMP FOR MARIO TENNIS?

Once you've created your lists, you wait for proposals. Swap sites e-mail you whenever someone offers something on their "have" list for something on your "want" list. You then can accept or decline the offer. If you decline, the other guy may renegotiate, sweetening the pot with a better item, or perhaps with some cash. (Switchouse integrates nicely with PayPal, the popular online payment system.) If you want to propose swaps of your own, that's easy, too. Click on any item on your want list, and up pop items desired by people who have it. You have Mario Tennis and want a VHS copy of *Forrest Gump*. I have *Forrest Gump* and want Mario Tennis. Let's trade.

But therein lies the problem: Mario Tennis is worth a lot more than *Gump*, and while I'm eager to take the deal, you probably aren't. Switchouse doesn't assign values to swap items. So you have to scan through those items and find something that's close in value. And hope that the other person agrees.

It's not a simple task. Take my hunt for Mario Tennis. Bought new, the game would cost about $60, but no item on my have list cost more than $20 new. Obviously, a one-

'At first glance, swap sites seem like a boneheaded idea. Trade my crap for... more crap? Why not just sell it on eBay and spend the proceeds on something nice?'

LAST YEAR'S HITS ARE THIS YEAR'S SWAPS WHICH TYPES OF ITEMS SEE THE MOST ACTION AT SWAP SITES? THIS SAMPLING OF RECENT LISTINGS AT SWITCHOUSE ADDS IT ALL UP

Till I Dropped

Swap sites can be a fun way to recycle old books, CDs, and videos... once you get past the greed and bad taste

for-one trade wouldn't work. That problem hasn't escaped Switchouse's notice, which is why you can add multiple items from someone's want list to your swap proposal. So, for one Mario Tennis cartridge I could offer two CDs or movies.

But will your swap partner bite? My first try for Mario Tennis, offering *Gump,* a mint hardcover copy of Michael Crichton's *Timeline,* and my *Abba Gold* CD, was declined. I then added some cash to the mix. No reply. Next I found Nick, from Canada, who had Mario Tennis and a want list that ran to 27 pages and included such games as NFL 2K and Madden NFL 2000, both of which I had. But the two-for-one trade wasn't enough for Nick. I wasn't ready to give up, so I tossed in a Super Nintendo game. "I think this is more than fair," I wrote Nick. "Yeah, sure it's fair," Nick replied, "but no deal." Not knowing when to stop, I asked Nick if he wanted some cash, too. No dice.

What a snob, I thought. Maybe I should offer to wash his car and send him through college, too. I mean, it was just Mario Tennis. Then I looked again at Nick's want list, as well as the lists of other swappers who had nixed similar offers. They all had listed dozens of recently released games. I started getting it: Swappers don't want a lot of little items for one big one, even if the total value is a wash. They want another big item for their big item. My proposal to trade a shrink-wrapped *Lost in Space* DVD for a used, 10-year-old copy of the Legend of Zelda for the original Nintendo system wasn't accepted until I added $10, resulting in what was perhaps the most skewed deal in Switchouse history.

THE BODYGUARD FOR THE STUPIDS?

Many Switchouse user profiles warn you not to waste their time with insulting trades, but how do you know what's insulting? Compounding the problem: It's often hard to gauge the condition of an item. Don't expect pictures and elaborate descriptions (WebSwap allowed photos, but few users posted them). Indeed, often an item is described by a single word, such as *mint* or *excellent.* My Marilyn Manson CD came in like-new shape, but the Zelda game, described as "mint," was battered.

In the end, all that effort on Switchouse resulted in just three swaps. Sure, if I had listed nicer items, I might have gotten more action. Then again, I didn't want to part with any of my nice stuff, because it's, well, nice. Still, I wondered if a different approach to the swap model might work better. Enter MrSwap, which deals in movies, music, and games.

This site truly understands the laziness factor. Forget about hustling swaps on your own. Here you simply list the items you have, assigning each a value in a mysterious currency called "SwapPoints." You get five SwapPoints just for signing up, then receive more each time someone "buys" one of your items with their SwapPoints. The big advantage is that you can get something without having to figure what to give in return. You simply give SwapPoints. The disadvantage is that the SwapPoint is the most misunderstood unit of currency since the Susan B. Anthony dollar. One user wanted 18 SwapPoints for *Three Kings;* another, just one for *The Bodyguard.* Most egregious of all, one MrSwapper demanded 25 SwapPoints for *The Stupids* (MrSwap's selection isn't exactly stellar). This site desperately needs an Alan Greenspan to stabilize its economy.

GLENN FREY FOR CAKE MIX?

Of all the swap sites I looked at, the one I was sure would tank first was WebSwap, and I was right.

It made the fatal mistake of forcing its traders to offer all their items for sale as well as for trade, thereby turning itself into a low-rent eBay (if you can imagine that).

Sadly, WebSwap disappeared before I was able to consummate a trade with "Conniee" from Ft. Drum, New York, that would have been my biggest coup. Conniee wanted to unload two boxes of Pillsbury Holiday Funfetti cake mix, complete with two tubs of Funfetti icing. They could be mine for $2.50, plus shipping. But buying them would have been too easy. I wanted to swap. I offered Conniee $1 and my Glenn Frey CD, but she wanted the bucks, so no go. And no cake. I did manage to sell my *Songs From Ally McBeal* CD for my asking price, $7.19, before WebSwap shut its doors, so it wasn't a total loss. But I really wanted that Funfetti. R.I.P., WebSwap, and enjoy your cake, Conniee.

Meanwhile, most of the items I listed on all the swap sites I tried are still there, but I try to remain optimistic. Who knows? Maybe Yuri has friends. I wonder what else I could unload in Severodvinsk? ■

Alan Cohen is a *Yahoo! Internet Life* contributing writer.

WHY 14-YEAR-OLD JAPANESE GIRLS RULE THE WORLD

Want to understand the future? Talk to a teen in Tokyo

AS SHE DOES MOST WEEKENDS, MAI WENT DOWN TO HARAJUKU TO DO SOME STYLING. SHE put on her white, cop-style work shoes with the yellow plastic trim and her orange-and-white Raggedy Ann–goes-strabismic shirt, and she painted her fingernails red and blue and purple and lined her eyes in a contrasting shade of green. The effect maybe wasn't as accomplished as the looks on some of the other Harajuku girls—Mai had moved to Tokyo only 18 months ago, when she was 15, from way south in Hokkaido where there was absolutely zero going on—but she thought it would catch some eyes. Then she grabbed her three-inch, rhinestone-slathered cell phone, told the pink bear to lumber off-screen with some mail, and with a shake of her electric-dandelion hair took the JR line to Harajuku, where Koji Mizutani was waiting.

X *Charles C. Mann*

photography by KOJI MIZUTANI

MAI

MIZUTANI HAS BEEN PHOTOGRAPHING THE girls in Harajuku since the 1980s, but he got serious about it just two years ago. He likes to work out of Laforet, a six-story boutique warren 100 yards from the JR subway station. Right across the street from Laforet is a Gap, and in front of the Gap is a sunny corner with steps to sit on and some trees in planters—the kind of open space you don't see all that often in Tokyo—where the Harajuku girls congregate on weekends. There's something Mizutani likes about the girls' energy, the way they cheerfully scramble every known Western and Eastern cultural epoch into their own personal fashion mix tape. Sitting by the Gap (a store they wouldn't be caught dead in) they listen to J-pop on their MiniDiscs and dispatch their PostPets with messages to one another's cell phones. And they smile at the approach of Mizutani, a slight, smiling man with a brace of tiny silver cameras.

That afternoon he was not alone in Harajuku. All around him in the crowd were photographers and clothes designers and market researchers and entertainment engineers and fashion editors and cool-hunters and even some straight-media reporters. It was not as bad as Shibuya, one train stop south, where you could find half a dozen TV crews within a hundred yards of one another desperately looking for a scene. But it was crowded enough that a few minutes after he met Mai, another photographer shouldered him aside and grabbed a few frames of her look.

Most of the business and fashion people eyeing the crowd are Japanese, but increasingly they represent interests in Silicon Valley and Sixth Avenue, Chelsea and the Champs-Élysées. Richard Branson of Virgin personally checks out the scene when he's in town; Bill Gates plans to test his forthcoming Xbox game player in Tokyo (though not, of course, personally); a Sun Microsystems executive who prefers anonymity receives regular updates on the latest way Japanese kids use technology; Paul Smith, the British designer, visits Harajuku because the King's Road scene has lost its vitality. All of these people make their living by dancing ahead of the curve, and Japanese teenagers and twentysomethings may be the fastest humans on the planet when it comes to inventing and adopting and disseminating the next Next New Thing.

As a general rule, the science fiction writer William Gibson argues, Japan is the "default setting for the future," a beta version of 21st-century life. But the Japanese furthest ahead on the way to tomorrow are the young, and the ones at the vanguard are the teenage girls. No smarter or wiser than their coevals in Rochester or Rome, teenage girls in Japan nonetheless have what Gibson calls a "techno-cultural suppleness"—a willingness to grab something new and use it for their own ends—matched by no other group on earth. Stuffing their tiny purses with electronic foofaraw unavailable anywhere else, they live, according to Susan Corrigan, a critic for the British street-fashion magazine *i-D*, in "a modern space odyssey waiting for the rest of the world to catch up."

Ultimately, Mizutani believes, the rest of the world will catch up to the girls in his viewfinder. In different form, the technology—as well as fashion and culture—trends exemplified by Mai and her friends will show up on Western streets, perhaps within two years. But even then, Americans won't *really* have caught up, Mizutani suspects. Because by that time the Harajuku girls will be on to something else entirely.

NOT FAR AWAY FROM MAI THAT AFTERNOON were Yuriko, 17, and Erina, 16. Yuriko wore her hair in four thick columns that stood up straight from her head and were wrapped in green and yellow yarn, green and yellow being probably the only shades in the rainbow not found in her capri pants, which she had made by cutting up an antique kimono. She was sitting on the steps, sharing a bottle of Pocari Sweat with Erina, who had wrapped her red tights knee-high with purple shoelaces in a sort of *Gladiator*-meets-Powerpuff Girls style. On the ends of Erina's arms were garments with no entry in the sartorial dictionary—frilly, pot-holder-like jobbies that shielded the backs of her hands and looped to her fingers with purple nylon line. Both girls want to be in the fashion industry and had made their clothes, Japan being a nation where girls are still taught to sew.

None of this would have been of interest to Toshiro Iizuka.

What *would* have interested Iizuka about Yuriko and Erina was in their purses. Compared with their U.S. counterparts, the girls in Harajuku are utter gadget freaks: tiny pink MiniDisc players with clip-on remotes, aftermarket headphones festooned in blinking lights, digital cameras with built-in MP3 players, Cheki cameras like mini-Polaroids, even the odd handheld DVD viewer. But the one absolute must was the cellular telephone. Covered with fake, rubbery jewels and Hello Kitty decals, dangling lanyards with charms and amulets and tiny plastic dolls, cell phones, according to the cell-software company Index, sit in the purses and pockets of about 95 percent of all Japanese teenage girls—a statistic that if anything seems to understate the devices' ubiquity.

Mind you, these phones are not the ones familiar to Americans: stiff black badges of business power with blocky black-and-white or black-and-green displays. Instead they are almost weightless, pastel-hued lozenges with brilliantly sharp color screens. Unlike U.S. cells, the phones in the girls' purses are connected constantly to the Internet. The Japanese cell-Net, moreover, doesn't look like the Internet familiar to Americans. It doesn't even look like the dull crawl of stock quotes, weather reports, and sports scores touted by wireless-Web firms in this country. When Yuriko and Erina—and millions of other Japanese—switch on their phones, they are instantly plunged into a fantastic animated zoo of mail bears, singing goats, and toddler samurai. And if Japanese consumer-electronics combines have their way, this wholly different Net will be coming our way before the two girls finish high school.

Neither Yuriko nor Erina knew it, but the cellular menagerie in their purses owes its existence, at least in part, to Iizuka, general manager for the Multi-Media Life Create Center of the communications branch of Matsushita, the industrial giant in Yokohama. With his stand-up hair, intermittent shave, and rumpled jeans, Iizuka is so unlike the classic Japanese salaryman that he jokingly admits he "can't imagine" why Matsushita, the prototypical conservative Japanese conglomerate, has allowed him to work there for 25 years. Iizuka is too modest to say it directly, but after a conversation with him one has the suspicion that he believes the reason the

RUI

TEENAGE GIRLS IN JAPAN HAVE WHAT WILLIAM GIBSON CALLS A 'TECHNO-CULTURAL SUPPLENESS'—A WILLINGNESS TO GRAB SOMETHING NEW AND USE IT FOR THEIR OWN ENDS

Japanese are a few mouse-clicks ahead of everyone else is because of people like him—the ones who are clever about guessing what customers will like, and who are backed by companies willing to throw their ideas onto the market to see what happens.

Yuriko and Erina sit in front of the Gap, trolling for photographers and idly checking their phones. Yuriko lives in Chiba, an unhip suburb that is to Tokyo what Queens is to Manhattan, but she doesn't have a complex about it; Erina lives in town, and that's all right, too. Both like to do amusing things—wallowing in angst and dark irony seems *so* 1998. That's why they make their own clothes, for instance. That's why they want to become clothes designers. Do their parents know they are hanging around, hoping to attract a photographer's interest? Yuriko giggles. "Both my parents want to quit their jobs and start working in my atelier," she says. "They think it would be a lot more fun than what they are doing now." Then her phone squeals. When she picks it up, an on-screen robot is apparently waving hello.

Back in 1988, Iizuka formed the idea that the personal computers and portable phones of the day were, when it came right down to it, a pain in the neck. They were too expensive and too hard to use and too big to carry around. The ideal, he decided, would be technology you could simply throw on with your clothes—a computer in a belt, a phone in a brooch. But Matsushita engineers said what he called "wearable" communication was impossible, so he reluctantly switched to communication devices that were "pocketable." He led a team of people who measured people's shirt pockets and everything carried in them. "We realized that whatever we built had to be smaller than 100 cubic centimeters, the size of a cigarette pack, and less than 100 grams [3.5 ounces], the weight of a Zippo-type lighter," he says. "Humans feel what's in their pocket when it's bigger or heavier than that."

The first pocketable phone debuted in 1996, but Iizuka's vision wasn't fully realized until February 1999, when NTT DoCoMo launched i-mode, the world's first commercial wireless Internet service. (DoCoMo is a labored acronym for "Do Communication Over the Mobile Network.") The i-mode was instantly, wildly successful. Today, according to the consulting firm Accenture, three-quarters of Japanese cell-phone owners use their phones to connect with the Net, as opposed to about one out of 20 in the U.S.

From day one, Iizuka says, he insisted that the tiny new phones had to be "emotional devices," rather than "logical devices." Computer keyboards, he explains, are examples of logical devices—mechanisms dedicated to a specialized function. They are fast, efficient, and not much fun. Men and boys like them. Emotional devices, on the other hand, are expressive, customizable, and fanciful. They are for women and girls,

RUI: SHIN GINUSHI

although Iizuka believes that guys can pick up on their advantages, too. Following this logic, i-mode project head Mari Matsunaga, a self-confessed techno-novice, did not tout the real-time baseball scores available to i-mode subscribers. Instead, the spotlight went to...well, the God of Love.

The God of Love is based in the southwestern district of Setagaya, on the 13th floor of a building called the Carrot Tower—the headquarters of Index, a Tokyo software startup. Staffed by a cadre of brash, sleep-deprived hackers who would not be out of place in Silicon Valley, Index has been churning out electronic diversions since its founding in 1995, but reached its current level only when it started targeting Wireless Girls. Of its dozens of Net-phone services, the most popular is the God of Love. For $1.40 a month, users can tap the birth date of a potential mate into their phones; Index's servers respond with a computer evaluation of the likelihood that lightning will strike.

To the testosterone-addled, the appeal of this amusement is elusive, admits Akihiro Yamada, general manager of Index's corporate planning office. "When I describe the God of Love," he says, "boys always ask, 'That's it? Why would you pay for just *that*?' Girls understand it right away." Other, equally whimsical Index services let phone users consult animated tarot cards, download melodies for an on-screen goat to sing when the phone rings, and, in September, remotely control a knee-high robot called Dream Force 01. "Our users don't care about the Internet," Yamada says. "They just want to have fun." The company now has 1.7 million paying subscribers, a figure that is growing by up to 70,000 a month.

As everywhere else, the killer Internet app is e-mail—or, rather, Momo the pink e-mail bear. One of at least eight PostPets who "live," Tamagotchi-style, in the user's phone (others include Mini Rabbit Mippi, Big Mouth Hamster Jinpachi, and Mysterious Machine Shingo), Momo spends his day bouncing around a cartoon living room, complete with chair, coffee table, and food locker. When a message is tapped into the phone, a letter pops into existence on the coffee table. Momo snatches it up, sniffs at the address, pads off-screen—and appears on the recipient's phone. Clutching the note, the bear waves at the recipient, encouraging a rapid response and taking notes for its own e-mail to its master. (That's right—PostPets send mail to their owners, and complain if they're not fed by the other person.)

COVERED WITH FAKE JEWELS, DECALS, CHARMS, AMULETS, AND TINY DOLLS, CELL PHONES SIT IN THE PURSES AND POCKETS OF ABOUT 95 PERCENT OF ALL JAPANESE TEENAGE GIRLS

PostPets are the brainchildren of Kazuhiko Hachiya, an antic engineer-artist who in 1995 dreamed about a teddy bear carrying letters from his then-girlfriend. Inspired by his dream, he made the first PostPet to amuse her. Later he and two friends started a company to market the idea. It now has eight employees and, despite being robustly profitable, no plans to grow larger. Big companies get boring, Hachiya believes. Besides, if PostPet became a real company he couldn't sink the profits into the AirBoard, his attempt to make a flying skateboard. Reminded that physical law suggests that such machines should be inherently unstable—in fact, the prototype AirBoard has an unfortunate propensity to crash and catch fire in public demonstrations—Hachiya is not terribly concerned. "The one in *Back to the Future* worked," he says.

Pushed by the appeal of pink bears and love gods, Iizuka's pocketable phones have become, at least for the moment, the emblem, the epitome, the synecdoche, the ne plus ultra of Japanese girl culture. In the 109 Building, the vertical maze of hip miniboutiques that is one of the centers of Shibuya, the stores and elevators are filled with the soft trill of ring tones and the practiced darting of thumbs downloading hands of tarot or sending messages to be declaimed in the recipient's ear by the horrifically chirpy Mail de Girl. Coming into town on the subway, groups of girls silently thumb messages to each other on their phone keypads, *Check out the guy sitting next to you... Looks like a* [derogatory slang] *to me... You are so mean, Yuriko...*, all accompanied by secretive smiles.

Down a pedestrian street a few blocks from the Harajuku station, Mariko is texting a message to a friend. She's wearing a studded blue-jeans skirt with long fringes, a pink T-shirt, and a big flower-bedecked whatsit on her shoulder that resembles a floral epaulet. Clipped to the epaulet is a sticker-covered cell made by KDDI, DoCoMo's main competitor. Asked what she uses it for, she cheerfully itemizes its functions: e-mail, karaoke, an alarm clock, a fortune-telling game, connecting the phone to her Game Boy to play Pokémon Crystal....The list, notably, does not include using the device as a

telephone. Does she get actual calls on it? "From some people," Mariko says reluctantly. Who, for instance? "Well...my parents." And she grimaces slightly at the thought of people unfortunate enough still to be mired in the dreary, long-ago epoch when telephones were used for voice communication.

Although Iizuka has helped to create a totally different way of using both the Net and the telephone, he isn't savoring his triumph. Instead he has been working on the next generation of his cell-phone designs—fetishistic wireless objects that target the zillion kid microcultures in Tokyo. In a Matsushita conference room he pulls out suitcase after suitcase padded with black foam and stuffed with concept-design gizmos. A game controller with a phone that snaps off one side. A notebooklike device with an electronic map of Tokyo inside the front cover, a transparent overlay for satellite-beamed directions, a flat keyboard, a flat satellite antenna, and a removable phone-camera in the spine. A wrist phone—shades of Dick Tracy!—with two retractable rings, one a speaker, one a microphone, which users snake onto their thumbs and little fingers and hold beside their head. And so on, and so on, all of it to be tossed on the market with the abandon that the girls show when they sew up their wildest ideas and wear them onto the street.

Despite Iizuka's enthusiasm, it's hard for the listener to pay full attention, because he is giving his spiel in front of a line of mannequins with heads made of monitors and stylish devices that resemble big aluminum badges. This is the generation of devices to come after the next generation—his original inspiration, wearable computers, which Matsushita engineers now say may be technically feasible. The badges are full-scale electronic gadgetry that people will take with them everywhere. They will catch on first with the cool kids, he says, then the rest of the kids, then the adults.

Iizuka has spent the last two years going around Shibuya and Harajuku, showing test drawings to kids on the streets. Based, in part, on their reactions, Matsushita will decide which of his concepts to mass-produce. If the kids take up his products, the company may try them out in slower countries, such as the U.S. ("Wherever the Japanese shopper goes, the rest of the world soon seems to follow," sighs Waldemar Januszczak, art critic for the London *Sunday Times*.) Asked if on the streets he is sometimes mistaken for a fashion photographer, Iizuka simply smiles. He does especially like to talk to the girls, he says. He sometimes teaches art in a high school for girls. "The girls really know," he adds. "Wearable computing will happen here first."

GERA GERA IS A CHAIN OF 31 STORES, ALL but three of them in Tokyo. Because *gera gera* is the sound Japanese comic-book writers use to indicate laughing, the name roughly translates into "ha-ha." The stores sell an unusual service that invites speculation as to the roots of Japan's love affair with technology. Indeed, Gera Gera invites consideration of what might be called the Theory of the Lonely Child.

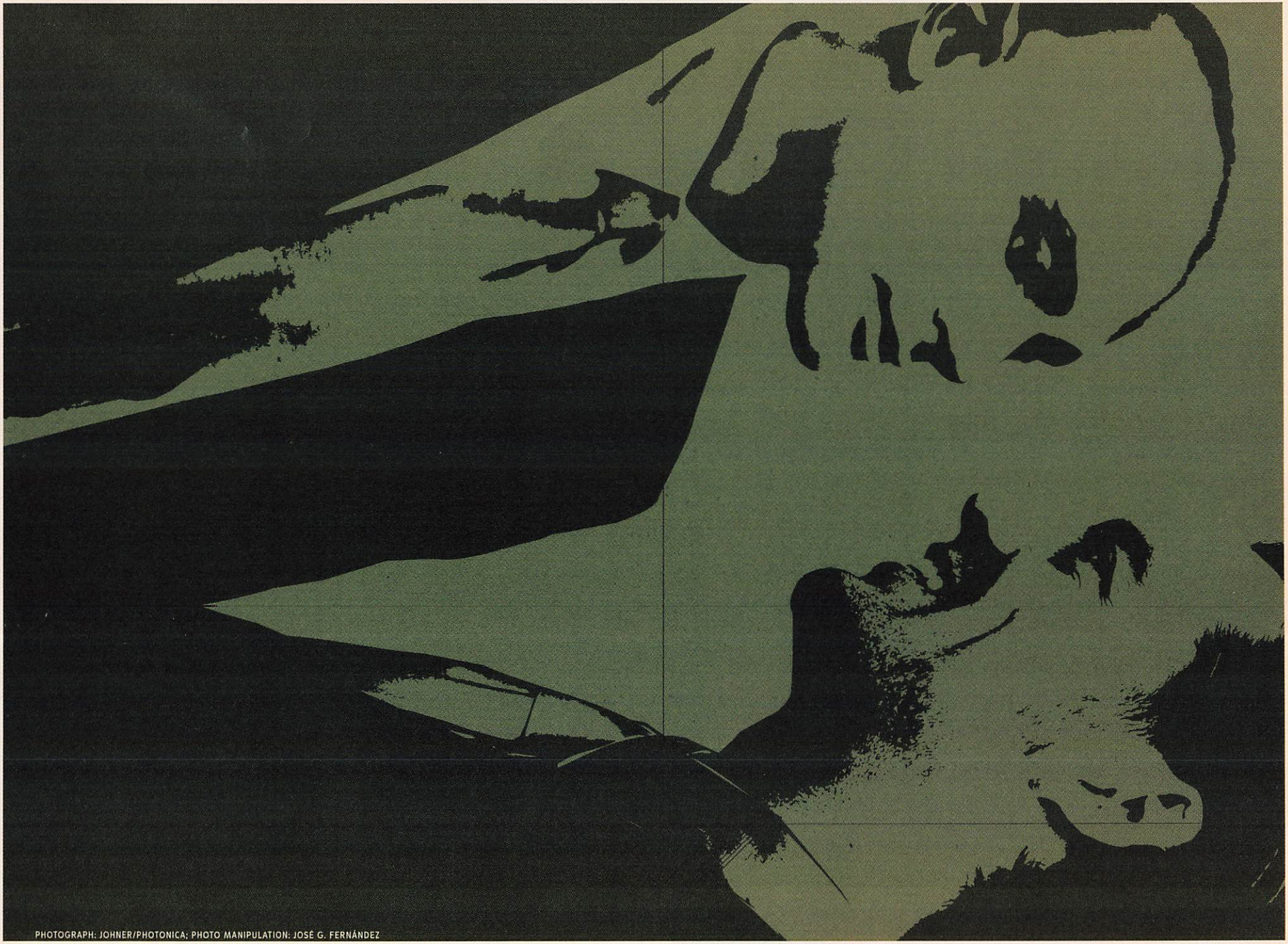
Japan is famous for its capsule hotels, which have coffin-size bedchambers that are stacked three or four high. Gera Gera has something of the same flavor, except that instead of renting an ersatz micro-bedroom, people rent ersatz micro–living rooms. Walking into Gera Gera is actually kind of creepy. If Japan lives in the future, then these stores are a peek into the downside of tomorrow.

The Gera Gera in Shibuya is on the eighth floor of an anonymous building a few minutes' walk from the JR station. Inside is a dimly lighted, low-ceilinged room reminiscent of the offices in *Being John Malkovich*. Guarded by a phalanx of bleach-blond slacker attendants, the space is divided into several dozen cubicles, each perhaps five feet square, with a tiny daybed, an equally minute desk, a Net-enabled computer, a DVD/CD player, and a couple of video-game boxes. Customers can borrow the phone book–size comic books known as *manga* from a startlingly large collection or rent CDs and DVDs from the front desk. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, kids slouch into the cubicles, clap on headphones, and spend hours zoned out before the machinery in utter silence—Gera Gera is the quietest place in the district. The price: 380 yen ($3.15) for the first hour, 50 yen every 10 minutes thereafter.

More than 20 years ago, the chain began existence as a simple manga-rental shop in Nagoya. Only in the last three years has !dea link, the parent company, expanded the company; now it is discussing the possibility of moving to the U.S., which seems ready to catch up to Japan in this regard, too. Increasingly, says Kazuya Kasuga, manager of the central Gera Gera in Shinjuku, "people want to sit in a small booth away from other people and daily life. But they don't actually want to be by themselves—they want to be alone in a crowd." Not 10 feet away, a twentyish couple sits in an adjacent booth, both wearing thickly padded headphones as they play a video game. Waiters serve them burgers and fries, which they snatch at wordlessly in the brief intervals when their characters die. "A lot of people come here for dates," Kasuga says.

To Yumiko Mori, executive producer of the Children's Art Museum Park in Kyoto, the popularity of Gera Gera immediately brings to mind the phenomenon of *hikikomori*. The term means "shut-ins," more or less, but to Mori's mind a better translation might be "empty-shell people." Hikikomori, a nationwide CONTINUED ON PAGE 127

KIKA: SHIN GINUSHI



PHOTOGRAPH: JOHNER/PHOTONICA; PHOTO MANIPULATION: JOSÉ G. FERNÁNDEZ

EXIT STRATEGY A NOVEL

The year was 2008. The newest technology boom was in full force. And a group of former hackers had an idea that could change the Net—and the world. An exclusive excerpt from a new kind of novel

BY DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF

A note from the annotators

SINCE ITS EMERGENCE 11 YEARS AGO, THE DELTAWAVE MANUSCRIPT HAS STIRRED CONTROVERSY IN ACADEMIC, RELIGIOUS, AND, OF COURSE, ANTHRO-TECHNOLOGY CIRCLES. ALTHOUGH FORENSIC EVIDENCE STRONGLY INDICATES THAT THE FILE WAS CREATED OVER 200 YEARS AGO IN ABOUT 2008, EXPERTS HAVE NOT RULED OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT IT WAS GENERATED MUCH MORE RECENTLY BY HISTORICAL PRANKSTERS OR EVEN REVISIONIST ACTIVISTS.

WHATEVER ITS ORIGIN, THIS TEXT PRESENTS US WITH A UNIQUE OUTLOOK ON THE RISE OF MARKETPHILIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY, AS WELL AS THE PROLIFERATION OF REACTIVE ARCHITECTURE IN THE EARLY INTERNET ERA. IT ALSO SERVES AS A RARE WINDOW TO AND CASE STUDY IN THE GREAT CAPITALIST EXPERIMENT.

THIS NEW 10TH ANNIVERSARY ANNOTATED EDITION INCLUDES EXPLANATORY FOOTNOTES AND PRIMARY SOURCE DATA CULLED FROM THE ARCHIVAL RESOURCES OF OVER 30 UNIVERSITIES AND RESEARCH INSTITUTES. IT IS HOPED THAT WE HAVE MADE THE TWO-CENTURY-OLD TEXT MORE ACCESSIBLE TO THE MODERN CASUAL READER, WHILE PROVIDING THE SCHOLARLY COMMUNITY WITH REFERENCES FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY.

I wasn't in it for the money. Honest. I was in it for the game.[1]

Maybe it was the setting—that fresh Hamptons air. Or the Merlot. But when Alec's father offered me a position as a technology researcher at M&L, somehow my job writing the back-stories for video games no longer felt like a high leverage point from which to alter the very current of American culture. No, it seemed like the sidelines. Mr. Morehouse was giving me the chance to play for real, in the big leagues. A game with genuine stakes: money. And I knew as long as I remembered it was just a game, I'd be okay. Hell, it was 2008. We'd made it through the Great Correction. Now, everybody knew what was really going on.

Most of the people attending *The Silicon Alley Reader*'s monthly soiree hadn't even heard of HTML a decade ago, and here they were prancing around as if they had invented the Internet itself. The nightclub was a zoo—a giant concrete room booming with '90s electronica that rattled the huge Mylar sheets hanging from the rafters above. Men in European suits that should have had expiration dates stamped in the collars and women in dresses that either hid or showed off their figures all held plastic cups and shouted at one another. Too much noise and too many people to distinguish anything or anyone of value.

Alec, a blur of herringbone and slick blond hair, took me by the elbow and whisked me through the crowd toward a quiet corner from which to hold court. We weren't going to work this crowd; we would let it work *us*.

No, I had nothing to fear from the wealthy. Their money didn't make them confident; it made them scared. They all had mortgages and lifestyles to protect. Personal burn rates that would make a dot-com[2] CEO shudder. Net worths tied up in Nasdaq[3] portfolios that were worth no more than what people were willing to pay at any given moment. The superrich were only as wealthy as other people perceived them to be. But that was pretty damn rich, all the same, and I wanted to win some of that perceived worth for myself and then cash in my chips before the game was over again—which I figured would be pretty soon.

"Have you met Jamie Cohen? He's just joined us at Morehouse," Alec told the tall young man in an Armani suit and turtleneck who was shaking my hand.

"Didn't I see you at Comdex earlier this year? Weren't we on a panel together?" he asked. I didn't know him, and he didn't know me. But you could never be sure. "Ty Stanton. IDPP Partners."

"Pleased to meet you," I said, slipping into the schmooze groove. "IDPP's an incubator, right?"

Ty snorted as if this were an insult.

"The age of incubators is over, Jamie." Ty fanned out a deck of colored business cards.

I felt my intimidation flip into aggression. "Is this a magic trick?"

Ty was unfazed.

"It's meant to demonstrate our one-to-one philosophy, Jamie." He used my name at the end of every sentence—a technique straight out of the NLP[4] business books. "Each person gets the kind of card they choose—just as each of our clients, if you can call them that, gets the company he chooses. It symbolizes and even actualizes our corporate philosophy: multidimensional, improvisational, and environment-specific."

THE INTERACTIVE NOVEL
These excerpts are adapted from *Exit Strategy*, now being serialized in 14 weekly installments at **yil.com/exitstrategy**. The author encourages you to offer your insights, opinions, and cross-references by adding your own footnotes via the Web site. One hundred reader contributions will appear in a future e-book and print edition.

"Clever," Alec said, taking a card. "Humph. I got pink."

"You chose pink, Alec," Ty corrected him in the manner of a New Age guru.

"I'll just take a white one." I put it in my pocket, and handed one of my own freshly embossed M&L cards to Ty.

"No thanks, Jamie," Ty said, waving it away. "I never take them. They just make clutter. And I'm *good* with names, Jamie. Besides—anyone that we need to contact, well, we're in a lucky position. They usually find us first."

I didn't know whether to take this guy seriously. Alec resolved the issue.

[1] Statements such as these must be understood from within the mind-set of the narrator's contemporaries. Two centuries ago, market fascism was just reaching its zenith. All values were still measured in dollars, and the "bottom line" for this society literally meant the bottom line of a balance sheet. Money, as the narrator suggests in his opening quip, was a hard currency to resist for victims of this era's pancultural psychosis, especially when the most-watched medium of that period—more than radio, television, or even the Internet—was capital.

This may seem odd to modern readers, given the ease with which funds could be obtained at the turn of the century. Indeed, detailed analysis of the financial metrics of the era leads most historians to conclude that money was virtually everywhere. Although the stock market had suffered extended downturns—most notably the "correction" of 2001—such wild fluctuations merely served to reinforce what could only be called a societal obsession with market speculation.

[2] Owing to an artificial scarcity perpetuated by a former government agency called Network Solutions, all online businesses took names that ended in the letters *com*, sometimes paying upward of a million dollars for the words preceding the suffix.

[3] The National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotation system opened in 1971. The short-lived stock exchange promoted mostly technology issues, as well as transaction schemes that depended on computers for their execution. Devotees of the Nasdaq erected a temple in honor of the exchange in New York's Times Square.

[4] Neurolinguistic Programming. A branch of hypnotherapy that was adapted for use in negotiations, the courtroom, and sales, NLP used visual, tactile, and linguistic cues to trigger cognitive responses in its subjects. Some NLP applications were outlawed in 2011 after NLP was used in television commercials for children's toys and resulted in hundreds of epileptic seizures and several class-action lawsuits.

Individual chapters, with additional footnotes, can be read online at yil.com/exitstrategy.

"How many of IDPP's companies have reached IPO?" he asked. "Fifty?"

"Closer to a hundred, actually, Alec," Ty replied. "But our function goes well beyond incubation. Each company we launch serves a different and synergistic role in the IDPP family. We have firms that make everything from chips to routers, others that do branding and strategy, some shared-satellite plays, a couple of wireless portals, and, of course, a full spectrum of e-commerce and shopping aggregators."

The shotgun approach.

"I guess you've got the bases covered." I tried to be polite.

"That's just the point," Ty continued. "We had the same bases covered as everyone else. Our business plan used to be unique. Now it serves as the template for incubators around the world. They're all getting the same ROI."

"ROI?" I was expecting a ploy that had become popular in hacker circles, where programmers use fake acronyms to test one another's BS quotient. If you pretend to understand an acronym that has no real meaning, you expose yourself as uninitiated.

"Return on investment, Jamie." Ty smiled. "And you're the one who's supposed to bring Morehouse into, what was it, the 1980s?" Ty's barb was delivered perfectly—dangling between insult and humor.

"So you've been unsatisfied with your returns?" I offered.

"They're great, of course, but everyone else is catching up. Besides, once you're looking at ROI, it means you're done for. That's the great lesson of 2001."

"Is that what we learned?" I asked.

"You have to keep your eyes on the prize. It's our competitive advantage that keeps us in a leadership position. That's why our CEO conceived the next phase." For drama as much as sustenance, Ty grabbed a baby quiche off an hors d'oeuvres tray that was floating by him.

"Which is?" Alec took the bait.

"Well, the press release isn't going out until tomorrow," Ty said as he picked a tiny bacon bit from between his teeth. "I'm not sure it's kosher."

"That's okay," I called his bluff. "You better not reveal privileged information." Companies like IDPP announced earth-shattering paradigm shifts at least twice a week, especially when they had no real news of mergers or acquisitions to report.

"I suppose it'll be all right...," Ty pretended to relent.

"No, really," I needled him. I was having a good time now. "I don't want you to break any rules on my account."

"Look." Ty tried to retain some intrigue for his revelation. "As long as you promise not to act on anything until the market opens tomorrow."

"I don't know, Ty," I said hesitatingly, as if it pained me. "It's hard for me to make a commitment like that. At a party and all. I have been drinking, and there are other people in my firm to think about."

Alec shot me a harsh glance, like I was pushing this too far. No one spoke for a moment.

"Not bad, Jamie." Ty took a step back, regarding me as a pecking-order competitor for the first time. "Not bad at all."

"Thanks," I said. I was actually grateful to him for helping me get my sea legs. "Now tell me what the hell your CEO decided, okay?"

"Well, since it's too late to make any real advances in the incubator game, we decided to take it one step further. Basically go meta on the whole proposition." He looked deep into my eyes. "We're going to be incubating incubators."

"What?" Alec was confused. "You just said incubators were over."

"Which is why we took it to the next level," Ty finished the syllogism.

"I get it," I said. And, much as it pains me to admit it now, I did. "The struggle is against commodification. The bright idea you have today is the repeatable, mass-produced commodity of tomorrow. Microchips used to be cutting edge—now they're designed by computers and churned out in Singapore. Then it was computers, then networks, then e-commerce sites, and so on."

"Right," Ty chimed in. "Look what e-commerce did to everyone who tried it. Once there was more than one company selling the same thing online, those aggregator sites could create side-by-side comparisons. Prices went down, taking margins with them."

I felt propelled by something outside myself—as if I was on speed. "The whole trick is to get yourself situated in an area with endless novelty," I raced ahead. "Unique ideas. That's why incubators became all the rage. Firms dedicated to hatching ideas and spawning them off into new companies. Keeps you in the new."

"Until everyone starts doing incubators, that is." Ty steered the conversation back toward his paradigm shift. "So we realized we could be the next big thing by generating idea generators, systematically. We're going to churn out three new incubators every month."

"And what if someone else starts making incubators?" Alec asked.

Ty seemed stumped by the possibility of infinite regression.

I rescued him. "I guess that's when you shift paradigms again, Ty."

All three of us laughed. For different reasons.

"So what do you at IDPP?" I asked. "Strategy?"

"Heavens, no," Ty snorted again. I couldn't help but notice how huge his nostrils got when he did. "I'm like Alec here. I do PR." Then he was off.

That explains it, I thought, as Ty sidled off to glad-hand the marketing director of a banner-ad company. He's just a PR guy. But what made "strategy" any better? This industry wasn't even running

I remember fantasizing how I would submit to torture or even death, if the opportunity presented itself, rather than reveal my comrades' identities to the Secret Service. Such was the loyalty our posse of hackers felt for one another

on fumes anymore, but on perception. Strategy had more to do with predicting and tweaking image than it did with technology. And the technology that did exist was dedicated mostly to creating images, anyway. Another infinite regression. Did anyone really think this would work, or were they only trying to find an easy exit before the next burst of the bubble?

Alec didn't waste time pondering all this. While I mulled, he snared another executive.

"Was that Ty Stanton?" asked Alec's next catch—a bald, stocky man in a crisp ventless suit. "He's with an incubator now, right?"

"If that includes pretending you're not an incubator," I said, holding out my hand.

"Jamie Cohen is our new technology strategist, Karl," Alec said, elevating my title in the process. "Karl is CFO at Consumer Solutions International."

"Jamie Cohen, the hacker?" Karl inquired suspiciously.

"In a former life," I answered as we exchanged cards.

Before I could gauge Karl's response, I heard a voice so familiar I couldn't even place it at first. "Assembly of the corporate machine's incarnate manifestation is proceeding on schedule, eh?"

I swung around and saw him. It was Jude. Three years older than the last time we'd met—at a computer game developers' convention in Atlanta—but pretty much the same. His bushy red hair was a bit thinner and his wiry red beard, a bit thicker, but this was the same angry, inspired, and manic Jude. I felt an urge to cover myself up. My suit made me feel nude.

"Well, that's what's going on here, right?" Jude gave one of his Jack Nicholson glints. "The conversion of the communications infrastructure into a physical home for the corporate life form? So it can have eyes and ears?"

"I'm Alec Morehouse." My current best friend shook hands with my former best friend.

"Pleased to meet you, Alec," said Jude. But he never took his eyes away from mine. It felt like that staring contest between boxers while the ref gives final instructions.

"It's good to see you, Jude." I didn't mean it, but I really wanted to. "I've been intending to call, but things were so busy and, well..."

"It had gotten to be such a long time that you got scared to think of how I'd react," Jude said, breaking through the small talk.

"Yeah. I guess."

Alec, ever discreet, pretended that a Morehouse associate across the room had summoned him over and left us alone.

"Expanding ROI?" Jude made sure I knew he had heard it all. Every last bit of my sold-out, profit-driven rhetoric.

"I just learned that acronym tonight, Jude. I was blowing smoke up his ass to get a reaction, that's all."

"Yeah, well, where there's smoke there's buyers, eh? Blow enough of it in that guy's butt and he'll float on air like everything else around here." He paused a second and looked in both directions, as if to make sure the coast was clear. "Those CSI guys are Nazis, you know. It's all online. Look at where their money was in 1939."

"If you looked at where everyone's money was in 1939, Jude, you wouldn't be able to do business with anyone."

"*Q. E. D.*," Jude smirked, in the language of a geometric proof. "*Q. E.* f---ing *D.*"

"You haven't changed a bit."

"That makes one of us," Jude started in. "How far into the service of the machine do you plan to get, Jamie?"

"Like you should talk? What the hell are you doing here, anyway?"

"Hey, I always liked the circus," he said. "Besides, I figured I'd find you here."

"Yeah, right," I goaded him. "You got into the Silicon Stars list this month, didn't you?" *The Silicon Alley Reader* put out a monthly chart of the 500 most influential Internet players.

"For the zine, yeah," he said defensively of his online hacker's magazine. "But for the opposite reason of most of these people. We don't even take advertising."

"That hack that brought down six trading sites for four hours...." I pretended to be putting two and two together. "Wasn't there some mention of your Web site in the news reports? Something about being a node for anonymous distribution of denial-of-service programs?"

"They never proved anything."

"But it got you on the *Reader's* list. Now you'll be famous."

"Just following in DeltaWave's footsteps."

That was a low blow. Too low, considering his role in my capture.

"I'm sorry, man," Jude said. "Really. That's all old history, right?"

"Yeah, I guess so. That move you pulled with the Feds backfired after all, got me into college. Even got me this job."

"That's what I'm apologizing for, Jamie."

My fellow Jamaican Kings, as we called ourselves, may not have had it in mind at the time, but they were responsible for everything. We had been as tight as brothers. I remember fantasizing how I would submit to torture or even death, if the opportunity presented itself, rather than reveal my comrades' identities to the Secret Service. Such was the loyalty our posse of hackers felt for one another. Most of the time.

We all took the same train from Queens to Stuyvesant High—a smart kids' public school that served as New York City's last-ditch attempt to keep a few upper-middle-class white kids in the system at all.

I had nothing to fear from the wealthy. Their money didn't make them confident; it made them scared. They all had mortgages and lifestyles to protect. Personal burn rates that would make a dot-com CEO shudder

On the long No. 7 ride into Manhattan, we'd gather in the last subway car and dig through one another's boxes of disks, exchanging the "warez" we'd garnered during our previous night's exploits on the Net. Most of it was the software for new arcade games—the ROMs that could then be played on a computer through an emulator. No more quarters wasted on Street Fighter at Star Pizza. Just mount the game's ROM on a PC and play for free. Whatever one kid found or stole he shared with the rest of the Kings. It was the rule: no personal ownership, and no personal fame. All hacks and spoils belonged to the posse.

I was the only member with a real conflict of interest. Each year, one senior student was selected to maintain the school's computer lab—and to manage access privileges for everyone else. I appeared trustworthy enough to win this coveted honor when I was still a junior. Mr. Unsworth, the computer instructor and lab supervisor, had even given me a digital pager so that I could be alerted in the event of a system failure. My quasi-girlfriend at the time painted it in Day-Glo colors to balance the inherent authoritarian dorkiness with some skateboarder's edge. I was good—really good—but certainly not the very best programmer among us. I was simply the best at hacking the faculty—and maybe the least likely to crash the system just for the fun of it.

After graduation, I won a string of jobs developing networked gaming concepts for Internet startups in Boston, Los Angeles, and Toronto. Every one of these companies peaked and then failed before my options could be vested. That's when it occurred to me that I wasn't in the computer game at all. The real networked game was being played by brokers, angel investors, and CEOs. This was the big game. Instead of writing the back-stories for PlayStation disks, I'd write them for business plans.

Most amazingly, tonight it looked like Jude—far from condemning me—was hoping to play, too.

"There's something I have to show you," he said, leaning in confidentially. I could tell he was uncomfortable in his role as the solicitor.

"What? Where?"

"No, no, not here. It's a new technology me and the guys put together. I think it could interest you."

"You've got a business proposition? Is that what you're saying?" I wanted to force him to admit his intentions. That he wanted to get in the new.

"Yeah, but it's the business proposition to end all business propositions," Jude said a bit mysteriously. "You have to see it to know what I'm talking about."

"See it? You mean you actually developed something?" I joked. "From what I can tell, that's the last thing we're supposed to do around here."

"Come see," he baited me. I got the feeling Jude really wanted me to be part of what he was doing. That he really missed me as much as I, begrudgingly, missed him. "Believe me, Jamie, what we've got will blow the lid off everything."

For a minute I had half a mind to just walk out on that whole world of shiny suits and plastic cups and go back to my posse, where I belonged. Where the rent was low and the walk-ups were only one flight. What I managed to say was a bit less committed.

"Let's set up a meeting."

Waiting for me in the small, shared conference room next to my office at M&L, as I had scheduled but only half expected to find, were Jude, Reuben, and Benjamin, my 14-year-old cousin and hacker-in-training. I had called Jude back on Sunday morning and agreed to let him come in and demo his idea for the "ultimate killer meta-app." Something he and Reuben were calling TeslaNet and promising would make cable modems and high-speed telephone access obsolete, overnight. If it worked, we would change the operating system of reality itself.

Jude wanted me to see TeslaNet working on my own laptop, and asked me to bring it to them in Queens and maybe smoke a bowl, or let them come over to my new place and pick it up. I decided to let Benjamin deliver it to them instead. I didn't want a reunion on their turf, but I wasn't ready to let them see the luxury in which I would soon be living. Besides, Benjamin was pleading to meet the remaining Jamaican Kings. By allowing my young cousin to visit, I was demonstrating my trust in them.

Apparently they took Benjamin under their wing, because now the boy was tapping away at the keys on my computer, making final adjustments for the demo.

"Hey, Jamie," Reuben said, scratching his neck. Reuben was even taller than I had remembered, which made him look all the thinner. His acne was gone, but his strawlike hair still covered his forehead in unintentionally spiky bangs. Although Jude had always been the gang's leader, Reuben really was our Master Hacker. It made him something like a pope to Jude's king. Jude was in charge, and quite capable of writing a mutating virus or executing a daring break-in, but Reuben always had the final word about technological methodology. He knew facts that the others didn't, whether it was phone-switching protocols or machine language. And we all trusted him, because he answered to no higher authority than the elegance of code.

This made him come off as something of a libertarian, but he claimed he was really more of a benevolent technocrat. He believed that markets, culture, and matter itself would reach maximum efficiency as humans perfected their social and technological programming. When Jude wrote our infamous DeltaWave virus, it was Reuben who minimized the code down to a minuscule 78K. And while the rest of us were drooling over the damage we would wreak on Microsoft's public image, it was Reuben who thought of the virus as a gift to Bill Gates that would allow the software magnate to correct the security flaws in his Internet software. This was Reuben's main reason for spending so many hours paring down the virus to its essential lines of code. He wanted the virus to communicate as clearly and succinctly as possible.

Reuben wasn't dangerous, as long as you could keep track of whom he thought needed to be gifted with an important lesson at any given moment.

"Reuben!" I pinched his cheek. "I think you've grown!"

"It's been a long time," he said quietly. He was right. We hadn't seen each other since high school.

Jude put one arm around each of us and pulled us close. "And then there were three!"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 128

More efficient than a room full of cost consultants.

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web guide

WHERE TO, HOW TO, BEST OF: OUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO LIFE ON THE WEB EDITED BY CREE McCREE

DAVID NEEL

GATHERING OF THE TRIBES

Native Americans were among the Web's early adopters, spawning a host of pages devoted to Indian heritage and community events. Chief among their traditional gatherings are powwows, colorful celebrations of music and dance that are open to the public and feature markets with indigenous crafts. Related Web sites trace the history of these ceremonies and point visitors to tribal action around the country, on page 116.

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web guide

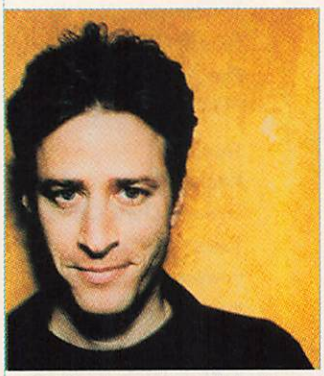
new, notable & fun

WHAT'S HOT — AND COOL — ON THE WEB THIS MONTH

BY MEAGHAN O'NEILL

RELAUNCH

Borders.com The book and music store has formed a co-branded site with Amazon.com, expected to debut this month. The joint venture will include some unique Borders content and full access to Amazon features and inventory. **[borders.com]**



MUG SHOT Comedy Central's Jon Stewart.

Comedy Central Think you're funny? Submit your jokes, stand-up routines, animations, or short films to Homegrown Humor; if you crack up the house wits, your work could end up on the site—and even on TV. Those feeling less creative can hit the goofy games in Timewasters, one of several new features. **[comedycentral.com]**

Bluefly Less playful, more chic is the theory behind the relaunch at this discount luxury store, which offers "first-class fashion, coach class prices." **[bluefly.com]**

FINANCE

WSJ.com: Startup Journal Thinking about launching a business? Consult the Center for Entrepreneurs for news on franchises, tools for creating business plans, and a database of venture capital firms. **[startupjournal.com]**

Bloomberg.com Investors trying to make sense of today's market can turn to the new Earnings Center for profit warnings and estimates. Check the announcements schedule and find ratings of individual stocks. **[bloomberg.com]**

PORTAL PATROL

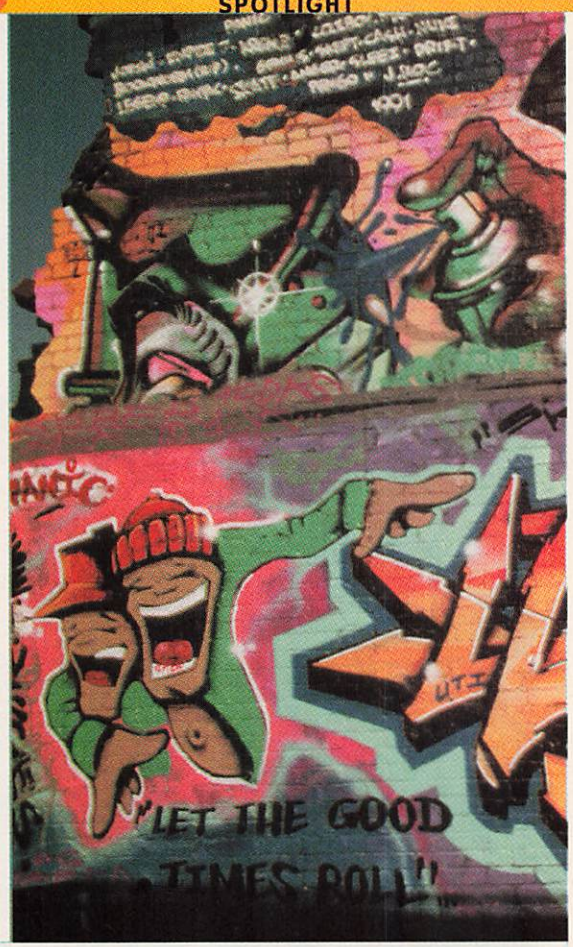
In alliance with Duet, Yahoo! Music [music.yahoo.com] plans to offer subscription-based streaming music and downloads. Users may also compile and share playlists with other members.

Passengers aboard the *Golden Princess* of the Princess Cruises fleet can surf the Web at the AOL Internet Café while they sail the high seas, then create personalized online travel albums at AOL Hometown [hometown.aol.com]. More ships will be added by year's end.

Gossip mavens can get their daily fix at Lycos Entertainment [entertainment.lycos.com]; the portal now posts features, news, and other buzz from *The National Enquirer* and *Star* magazine.

Network giant NBC will acquire full ownership of struggling portal NBCi [nbci.com], in order to integrate all of its Web properties.

SPOTLIGHT



STEWART: FRANK OCKENFELS 3/CORBIS OUTLINE; GRAFFITI: HENRY DITTZ/CORBIS

PHYSICAL GRAFFITI

Tagged as urban outlaws and hounded by police, many talented graffiti artists who survived the streets were later lionized in galleries. You'll find hundreds of images and interviews with classic spray-paint masters at **@149 St: New York City Cyber Bench [at149st.com]**. How did they manage it? Click on Kings of Broadway at **Broadway Style [movieplace.com/graffiti]** to sample firsthand accounts from the 1970s, when the trend was at its height: "I've gotten stitches, I've gotten shocked by the third rail, I've been hanging from a bar while a train pulled out from me and I was suspended in the air like 25 feet." Lest you think graffiti is strictly lowbrow, click over to Chris Pape's biography. His rendering of the Sistine Chapel ceiling on a train landed in the Museum of Modern Art.

RECREATION

eBay Golf Enthusiasts of the increasingly popular sport now have their own category at the Net's most famous trading community. Besides gear, golfers can vie for PGA event tickets, European getaways, and memorabilia, including some of Tiger's pro scorecards. **[pages.ebay.com/promo/golf]**

Thrasher With high street cred among skateboarders, the magazine takes its articles, interviews, and videos to the Web. Ready to rip? Use the construction plans to build a ramp, or find a skate park in a neighborhood near you. For musical inspiration, visit Punk-O-Rama. **[thrashermagazine.com]**

HEALTH

Dermatology in the Cinema Dermatologist Dr. Vail Reese gives a whole new meaning to the term "skin flick." The film buff follows the epidermal travails of the rich and famous (even Cameron Diaz gets zits) in real life and in movie roles, but the main goal is to educate the public. **[www.skinema.com]**

Scorecard Type your ZIP code to get facts from Environmental Defense about health hazards in your community. The interactive maps and charts deliver information concerning pollution, chemical toxins, and carcinogens in your area. **[www.scorecard.org]**

KIDS

BrainPop School may not be back in session yet, but that doesn't stop kids from spewing questions. The Flash-animated movies here encourage children to keep learning, because "the more you know, the more you know." Topics include health, science, and technology, with an online safety segment. **[brainpop.com]**

Story in a Box Youngsters can read Cinderella's diary or dress up the Princess (she of the pea) at this site, the online counterpart to Keri Smith's books. Print out paper furniture to go along with the physical boxes, which contain a book and fold into fun dioramas. **[astoryinabox.com]**

TRAVEL

Literary Traveler This online magazine is "dedicated to the exploration of the literary imagination." It takes you to places where famous authors lived and wrote, such as Hemingway's Ketchum, Idaho; Thoreau's Walden Pond; and Unionville, Nevada, where Mark Twain penned "Roughing It." Plan your own trip with the tour and event information here. **[literarytraveler.com]**

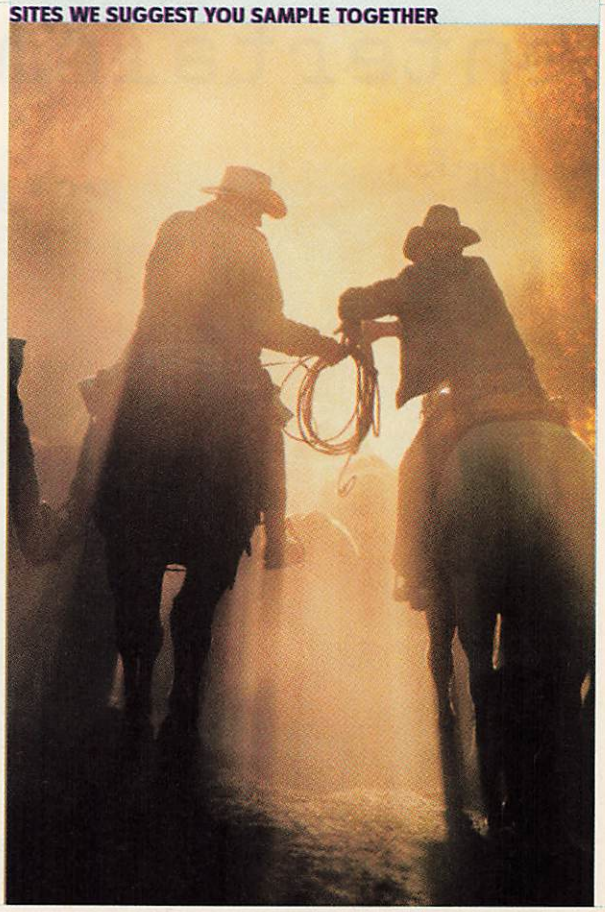
Around the World in 80 Clicks Boris Kester, a computer programmer turned flight attendant, is the photographer and author of these personal accounts, taking readers from an elephant orphanage in Kenya to mysterious Easter Island. Just don't blame us if you want to quit your day job, too. **[traveladventures.org]**

Nationalparks.org There's something all-American about loading up the car, heading down the highway, and touring the natural wonders of our country. Conveniently, you can now buy a National Parks Pass ($50) online, providing unlimited admission for one year to locales such as Denali National Park & Preserve, Carlsbad Caverns, Bryce Canyon, and Yellowstone. **[nationalparks.org]**

PHIL SCHOFIELD/GETTYONE

MISSING LINK?

SITES WE SUGGEST YOU SAMPLE TOGETHER

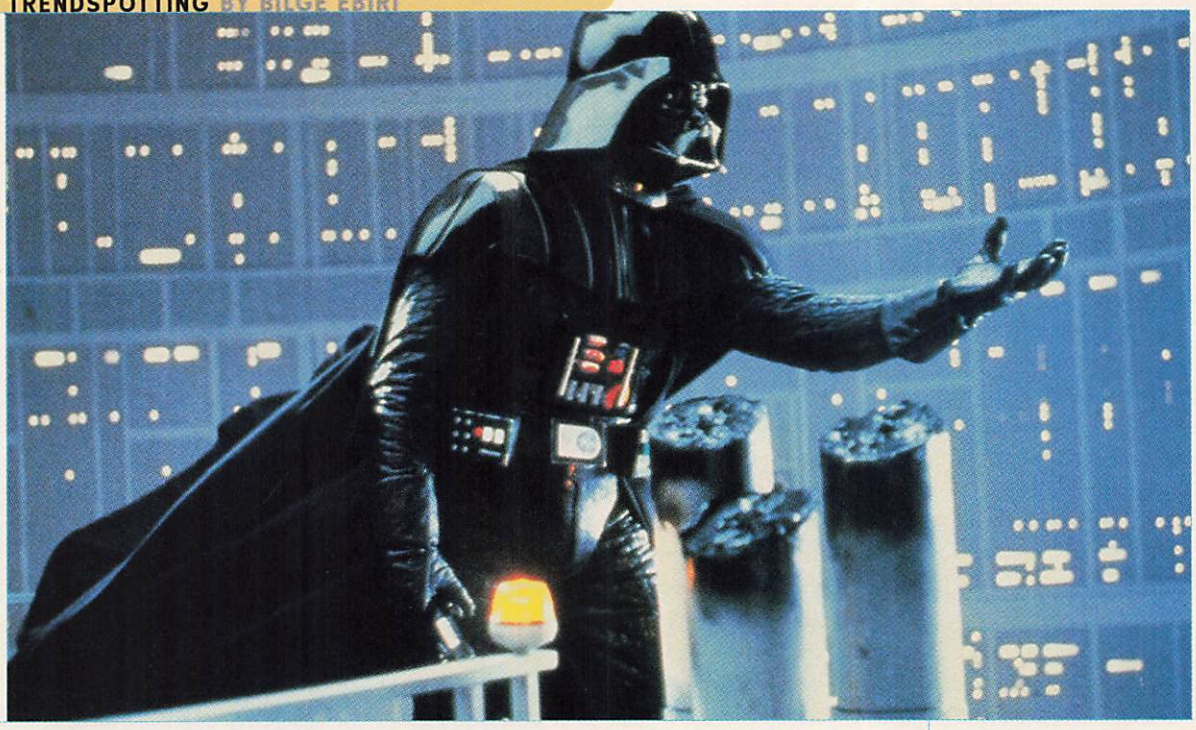


MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE RANCH

The day Omar West sat on a hilltop with "a few problems, a couple beers, and a writing pad," a poet was born. Soon he had reams of verse about women, wrangling, and riding, so he built himself a Web site: **Omar West's Cowboy Poetry at the Bar-D Ranch [cowboypoetry.com]**, where he posts his and other campfire poets' work. West's ongoing saga about life on the ranch with his girl Pearl is guaranteed to get you talkin' with a twang. Got a poem of yer own to share? You could be named the next Lariat Laureate.

But not all cowboys express their tender emotions in heavy metric rhyme. **Wylie & the Wild West [wylieww.com]**, regular performers on the Grand Ole Opry stage, prefer to yodel and strum. When not recording country-and-western albums (he's made five), bandleader Wylie Gustafson works on a ranch and competes in the rodeo. You might not recognize the sound clips on the site, but you've heard his famous pipes before: His claim to mainstream fame is the ubiquitous "Yahooooo-oooo!" you know so well from our namesake Web portal's television and radio commercials.

TRENDSPOTTING BY BILGE EBIRI



MAY THE FANS BE WITH YOU

TheForce.net streams the latest *Star Wars* buzz online

On the Web, there are fans and there are Fans. In the case of megabrands such as *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*, sites created by die-hard devotees can be as important in generating buzz as pages processed by the big-bucks corporate mother ship itself. Fanboys took a giant leap forward in January when **TheForce.net**, the leading *Star Wars* fan site, launched *TF.N Digital,* an online video series with...actual production values.

"It's like a news show meets *Access Hollywood,*" says cocreator Peter Orphanos, whose company, **Orphmedia [orphmedia.com]**, produces the series with the *TF.N* team. "Except it's all about *Star Wars.*" Programs focus on things that would interest the faithful, such as a piece on actor Ewan McGregor hiking during his downtime while shooting in Australia. This type of fan-based entertainment is also attracting other high-profile sites. Orphanos is currently working with **TheOneRing.net**, the biggest Web community devoted to the *Lord of the Rings* chronicles.

So how come studio storm troopers have not yet knocked down his door, bleating "copyright violation"? Maybe because, though Orphanos's programs are not studio-sanctioned—yet—they ultimately feed the marketing of their respective franchises. Just goes to show that on the Web, the line between "official" and "aficionado" is forever blurry.

MUSIC

THE ROLLING STONES

ON WITH THE SHOW

Time Is on Our Side They've been called the greatest rock 'n' roll band in the world—which probably explains why so many Web sites have been erected in their honor. As good a place to start as any, this page has a complete list of Stones albums (with lyrics and credits), along with quotes about each disc from the guys in the band. It also features a massive concert database—sorted geographically and by album—that doesn't cover just when, where, and what songs the band played. It also includes the names of the tunes they've never done live. **[mlink.net/%7Eian/stones.html]**

YOU GOT THE SILVER?

Rolling Stones: The Official Store There's no summer tour this year, but you can still get Stoned on the Web—especially if you go to their shows only to buy merch. The official store has all the Stones apparel you could ever wear, including jackets, hats, bandannas, and, of course, T-shirts. Find stickers, posters, lighters for the slow songs, and watches for the really, really slow songs (though, oddly, there are no "Gimme

DARTH VADER: *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* © 1980 LUCASFILM

Shelter" tents or mobile homes to be had). **[stonesbazaar.com]**

YESTERDAY'S PAPERS

The Rolling Stones: Beggars Banquet Launched in 1978, *Beggars Banquet* eventually became the official Stones newsletter. Editor Bill German stopped publishing the print version in 1996, but his online zine remains an invaluable resource. The site boasts news, rare photos, and audio and video downloads that sometimes include a hard-to-find tune. **[beggarsbanquetonline.com]**

PAUL SEMEL

GUEST GUIDE

KNOW-IT-ALL BEN STEIN

Author, teacher, actor, lawyer...Ben Stein defines the term *Renaissance man*, and continually tests his wide range of knowledge on his popular Comedy Central game show, *Win Ben Stein's Money*. Here, he lets us crib some of his most used bookmarks:

LEXISNEXIS A database originally designed to help lawyers research cases, it now has articles from hundreds of newspapers and magazines—even transcripts of TV shows. (There's a fee to use it.) **[lexisnexis.com]**

AMAZON.COM I doubt if there are even a thousand people in the whole country who order from Amazon more than I do. It's like a never-ending conveyor belt of packages sent from Amazon to my home, and to the homes of people for whom I buy gifts. **[amazon.com]**

E-CENTIVES I'm the Net entrepreneur's dream: a compulsive online shopper. I have stacks and stacks of unopened stereo equipment that I've ordered from e-Centives, a particularly good place to buy small appliances. **[e-centives.com]** KEVIN DELANEY

SPORTS

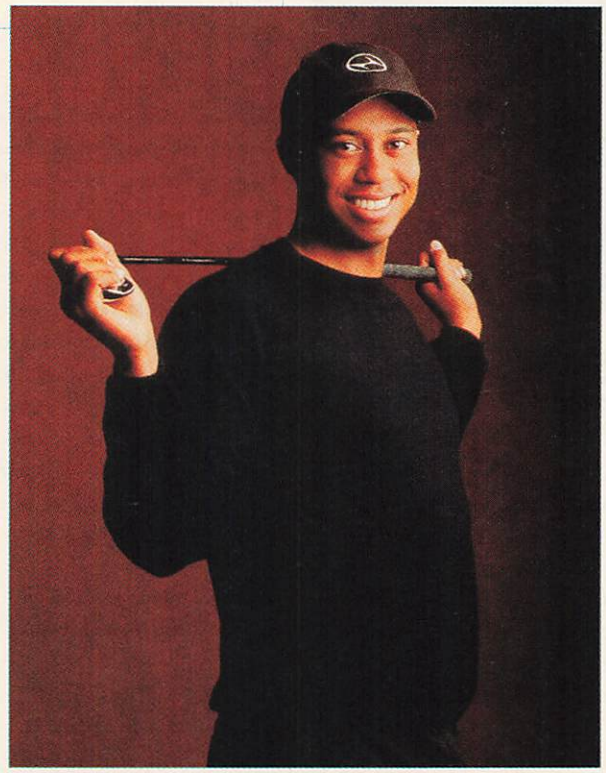
PGA GOLF

CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON

PGA.com Even before the pros hit the links, you can watch RealVideo of the city of Atlanta preparing for the 83rd PGA Championship (August 13–19)—and buy tickets online. After the victor claims the trophy, hunker down to watch instructional videos and improve your own swing, or plan a golf getaway at resorts around the country. PGA players of the week and a newsy home page keep site content as fresh as a well-watered green. **[pga.com]**

GLOBAL ACTION

PGATour.com & GolfWeb Covering events as diverse as the World Golf Championships, the Presidents Cup, and the Moroccan Open, this site tracks golfing worldwide. My Leaderboard keeps real-time tabs on the tournaments you care about, leaving you free to putter online for hours, reading GolfWeb columns and the Practice Tee's equipment pointers. Amateurs looking to master the fairway can question online chat guests, then use that advice to buy the right gear at the Pro Shop. **[pgatour.com]**



SWING KING Tiger Woods is the master of his own domain.

STAR ATTRACTION

Tiger Woods Official Site The phenom's bio compares Woods with past masters and begs the question on all visitors' minds: Is he the greatest golfer of all time? Use the Tiger Tracker to marvel at his performance at any tournament throughout his career. Fans who join Club Tiger (it's free) get access to a members-only area, tips from the man himself, and the chance to submit their own e-mail questions to the master. **[tigerwoods.com]** BRYAN VANDYKE

POP CULTURE

RETRO ACTION

WHAT WERE WE ON?

Bad Fads Museum Everything looks better in hindsight—except for the cultural embarrassments on display here. The '70s are, of course, largely represented, with entries on leisure suits, pet rocks, Farrah Fawcett hair, streaking, and other disco-era lapses in taste and judgment. **[badfads.com]**

BIG HAIR DAZE

The '80s Server If you lived through the '80s, you've got blackmail-worthy photos. New Wave, leg warmers, Pee-Wee Herman, and Rubik's Cubes are immortalized at this fee-subscription site, which banks on members' willingness to pay to relive the '80s. There's free stuff for those of us who aren't. **[www.80s.com]**

CHEW ON THIS

Regrettable Food Gallery Marvel at the lard-laden rations that sustained our forebears through the '40s, '50s, and '60s—fare forever frozen in time in old cookbooks and advertisements. It's a wonder Jell-O and Spam have survived. **[lileks.com/institute/gallery]** HEIDI LAFLECHE

STEIN: CLAUDIO VAZQUEZ/CORBIS OUTLINE; WOODS: MICHAEL O'NEILL/CORBIS OUTLINE

GETAWAY GURU BY SUSAN BRESLOW SARDONE

ORBITZ TAKES OFF

The airline-owned travel site has finally launched

After more than a year on the runway, **Orbitz [orbitz.com]** has taken flight. This partnership among traditional competitors American, Continental, Delta, Northwest, United, and other major carriers may change the way travelers buy a fare online. The concept is simple: Offer a vast, unbiased choice of flights from 455 airlines, plus Internet specials previously available only on individual airline sites. And the intent is clear: to capture business that has carried industry leaders **Expedia.com** and **Travelocity.com** to profitability.

Shortly after plans for the new site were announced, critics—including members of Congress, online and offline travel agents, consumer groups, and other airlines—deemed it anticompetitive based on Orbitz's airline ownership and its exclusive access to certain fare information. After examining these allegations, the Department of Transportation gave Orbitz the green light to open for business. Nonetheless, a review of its operations six months after launch is required. Meanwhile, the U.S. Justice Department and 23 state attorneys general are continuing to examine Orbitz for possible antitrust violations.

Is Orbitz the category-killer the industry fears? Time will tell. A quick search of domestic flights showed that Orbitz undercut Expedia and Travelocity on some fares but only matched them on others. Yet on an international flight (San Francisco to London), Travelocity turned up a one-stop trip nearly $400 cheaper.

Determined to challenge the online agents head-on, Orbitz is also offering hotel, cruise, car rental, and vacation-package bookings. Enhanced customer service, available via voice mail, e-mail, fax, pager, or PDA, means members can receive timely bulletins about delays, cancellations, air traffic, and weather conditions that might hinder a journey. For its competitors, though, Orbitz will surely cause unwanted turbulence.

SPECIAL EVENTS

POWWOWS

NATIVE GUIDE

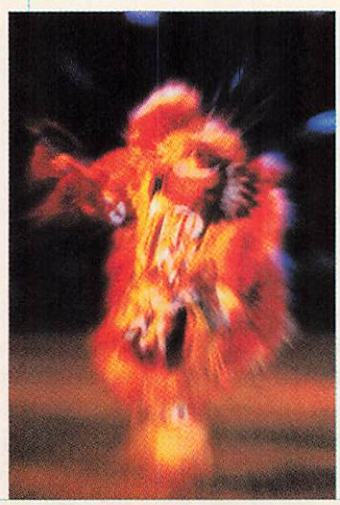
PowWows.com These colorful ceremonies take place in Native American communities throughout the year, but tribal action peaks from the spring to the early fall. Before you heed the call of the drum, come here to gain insight into powwows, which celebrate traditional and contemporary Indian culture. Learn about jingle dancing and other styles of fancy footwork, and visit the online gallery to view brightly beaded costumes and crafts. The site's calendar, with details on festivities across North America, can help you navigate the powwow highway. **[powwows.com]**

UTE POWER

Council Tree Pow Wow and Cultural Festival Each September since 1995, members of the Ute nation gather to dance and drum on the banks of the Gunnison River in Delta, Colorado, site of a 195-year-old cottonwood tree that marks the tribe's historical meeting grounds. The Web site provides an excellent guide to powwow symbolism, plus a schedule of events. **[counciltreepowwow.org]**

BIG CHIEF

Gathering of Nations Held each April since 1993 at the University of New Mexico, North America's largest powwow draws more than 3,000 dancers and singers representing more than 500 tribes. Plan ahead for next year's event at this impressive site. **[gatheringofnations.com]** ALEXIS ADAMS



AIRPLANE: LOUIS BENCZE/GETTYONE; POWWOW: CRAIG AURNESS/CORBIS

RIVER RAFTING

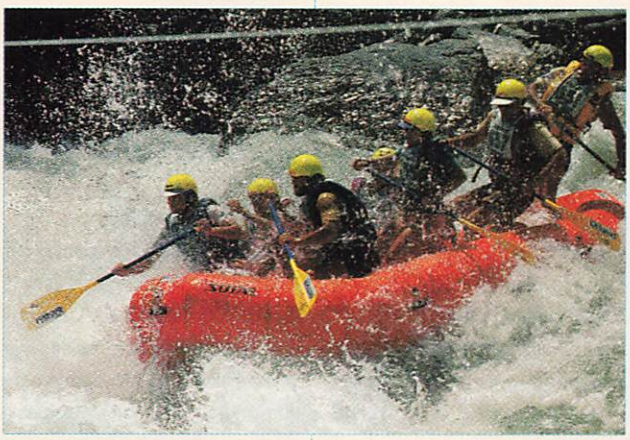
WET AND WILD

White Water Rafting Adventure Companies Roller-coaster rapids and turbulent, untamed water have become star attractions in Mother Nature's wild-river amusement parks. Participants need little or no experience, but it's a good idea to seek out a rafting company with more than a few seasons under its belt. This directory lists veteran outfitters on major white-water rivers in the U.S., Canada, and Chile. The site's guide to selecting a rafting trip can help you choose any type of excursion, from a mild splash of excitement to near-death thrills. **[rafting-whitewater.com]**

AFRICAN QUEEN

White Water Rafting: Victoria Falls Looking for a Grade 5 experience? "Extremely difficult, long and violent rapids, steep gradients, big drops, and pressure areas" await you in Africa's Zambezi River, below Victoria Falls, one of the seven natural wonders of the world. You can reserve a spot by e-mail here. The site also offers information on canoe safaris along the lower Zambezi, which separates Zambia and Zimbabwe. **[zambezi.com/raft.html]**

CARL FRANZ, LORENA HAVENS

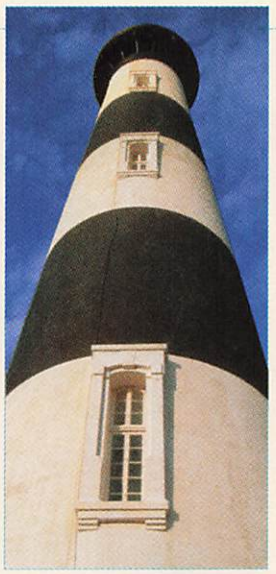


EXOTIC EXTREMES

Adventure for a Lifetime Use the Expedition Comparison Chart to decide which far-flung rapids you want to shoot. The Canadian Yukon offers strenuous rafting in the Primrose wilderness, while Tibet's Upper Yangtze provides smooth passage through scenic wonders marked by extraordinary isolation. *Extraordinary* is also an apt description of the site's extensive library of articles, which describe heart-pounding adventures in such renowned locales as Peru's Colca Canyon, the deepest in the world. **[earthriver.com]**

RAFTING: SKIP BROWN; LIGHTHOUSE: RAYMOND GEHMAN/CORBIS

THE OUTER BANKS



VIRTUAL DUNES

North Carolina's Outer Banks The delicate stretch of peninsula and barrier islands protecting North Carolina's coast is known for its physical beauty: beaches dotted with weathered cottages, three-margarita sunsets over the sound. Then there's the history, from England's first, lost New World colony on Roanoke Island to the Wright Brothers' first runway at Kitty Hawk. A good introduction to the region, this site offers links to many area rental agencies. If you do plan to book a cottage in the fall, some advice: Take that hurricane insurance! **[outer-banks.com]**

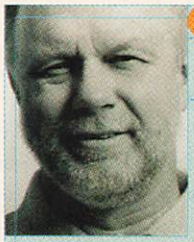
FROM THE LIGHTHOUSE

The National Park Service: Cape Hatteras The cape is the farthest North Carolina reaches into the Atlantic, and beneath its often-turbulent waters lies one of the great ship graveyards. To protect sailors, the Hatteras Lighthouse was erected in 1870, and it's a must-see for all lighthouse hounds. The site gives the lay of "where the land and sea merge." **[www.nps.gov/caha/capehatteras.htm]**

YO-HO-HO

Blackbeard! Ocracoke Island houses an impressive wildlife refuge, but few wilder things took refuge there than the infamous pirate Blackbeard. This site blends humor with history in honoring the scurvy brigand and one of his favorite vacation spots. **[ocracoke-nc.com/blackbeard]**

DONALD MILLER



EXPERT OPINION

SAVVY TRAVELER RUDY MAXA

Rudy Maxa, the original host of **The Savvy Traveler** **[savvytraveler.org]** on public radio, advises nomads at **RudyMaxa.com**. He won't leave home without these sites:

IPING I'm always paranoid that the hotel is gonna forget my wake-up call. This free Web-based service will get you up anywhere in the U.S. and Canada. **[iping.com]**

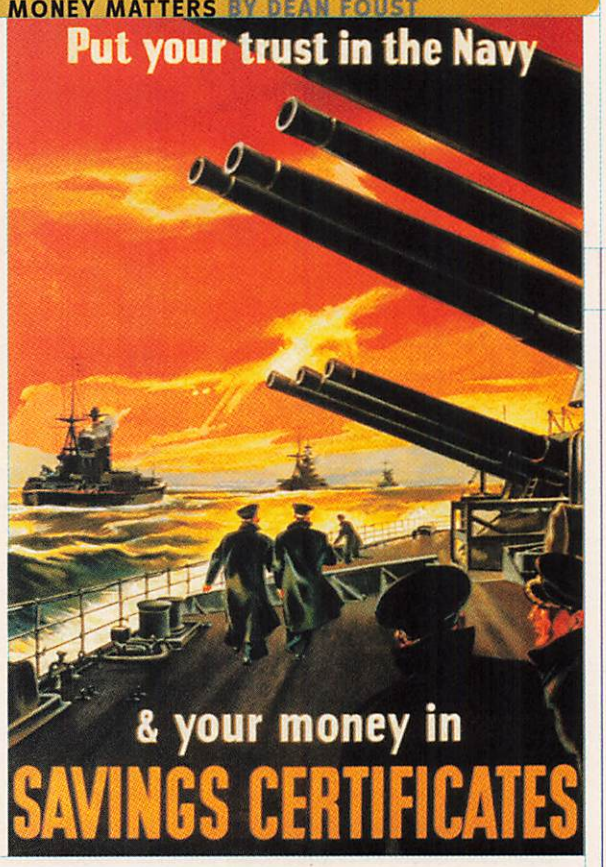
AMIGOINGDOWN.COM This site estimates for you the odds of dying in any given airplane trip. It's supposed to convince you of how safe flying really is, but don't count on it. Just compare flying a United 777 from Dulles to de Gaulle with taking a Russian air carrier from Moscow to Havana. **[amigoingdown.com]**

SWAPCASH.COM Order foreign money to be delivered to your home. **[swapcash.com]**

SWIMMERS GUIDE Find more than 10,000 full-size, year-round swimming pools in 97 countries, so you can stay in shape while on the road. **[lornet.com/sgol]**

HEIDI LAFLECHE

MONEY MATTERS BY DEAN FOUST



BUYING A LITTLE SECURITY

Looking to purchase bonds? Get a break online

"Buy bonds!" was the rallying cry a half century ago for a nation trying to finance a world war. Now it may become the new mantra for shell-shocked investors reeling from recent stock-market jitters. But for small-timers, buying bonds can be tricky. Unlike stocks, which are sold through centralized exchanges, bonds are still largely traded the old-fashioned way: Brokers call around Wall Street until they find the specific issue of bonds you're seeking—which makes it difficult to know whether the price you wind up paying is the best deal out there.

All that began to change in November 1999, with the launch of **BondDesk.com**. The site pools the collective inventories of more than a dozen major Wall Street bond dealers—and then offers that pool to participating brokers, ranging from E*Trade to DLJ Direct. With all the bond issues suddenly listed in the same market, differences in cost have narrowed, and it's much easier to comparison shop. "There's no doubt bond prices have improved for small investors," says Andrew Nybo, research analyst with the Tower Group. Although less than 5 percent of all bond purchases by small investors now occur online, the Tower Group estimates that the Internet will account for roughly 40 percent of all bond sales by 2005. "Bonds are going to become a very important part of the online brokerage business," Nybo says.

REAL ESTATE

MORTGAGES

THE ONE-STOP SHOP

e-Loan The Federal Reserve's recent interest-rate cuts helped send mortgage rates to their lowest level in two years. E-Loan offers a cogent explanation of how mortgage financing works (no small feat) and provides head-to-head comparisons of the rate options offered by its 70 participating lenders. In our test applications for a refinancing, the site beat its rivals by retrieving lower or comparable rates. **[e-loan.com]**

RATE CALCULATORS

Mortgage-calc.com The Net's most complete set of mortgage-related calculators includes several you can't find elsewhere, such as a tool that computes Canadian rates. **[www.mortgage-calc.com]**

CREDIT RATINGS

MyFICO Your credit record can influence the mortgage rate a lender offers you. For $13, which is only about $4 more than a standard credit report, MyFICO offers access to both your credit history and your "credit score"—a figure used by 75 percent of all lenders. **[myfico.com]**

CASH CONVERSIONS

AARP: Reverse Mortgages A reverse mortgage allows house-rich but cash-poor senior citizens to convert home equity into either a lump sum or a monthly income stream. Learn here how the process works. **[www.aarp.org/revmort]** D.F.

PERSONAL FINANCE

MONEY SAVERS

SIMPLE LIVING

The Dollar Stretcher Frightening but true: Per-household debt is almost three times the 1990 level. You can live better for less by consulting this savvy site. Plant a vegetable garden, find a reasonable auto-repair shop, run a dough-grabbing yard sale—and get a tax deduction on the leftovers. **[stretcher.com]**

RECYCLING CENTER

About: Frugal Living Don't throw away your used plastic bags. Cut them into strips and weave a shower mat! This site is loaded with do-it-yourself tips, such as how to make your own laundry detergent. And before you wash that towel, ask yourself, Is it really dirty or merely "not fresh"? **[frugalliving.about.com]** PAMELA DES BARRES

POSTER: CORBIS; UNDERWEAR: DONNA DAY/GETTYONE

widespread Panic

400,000 HITS A DAY...

...NO SHINER.

Don't miss the band on The Late Show with David Letterman July 23rd!

THE NEW ALBUM

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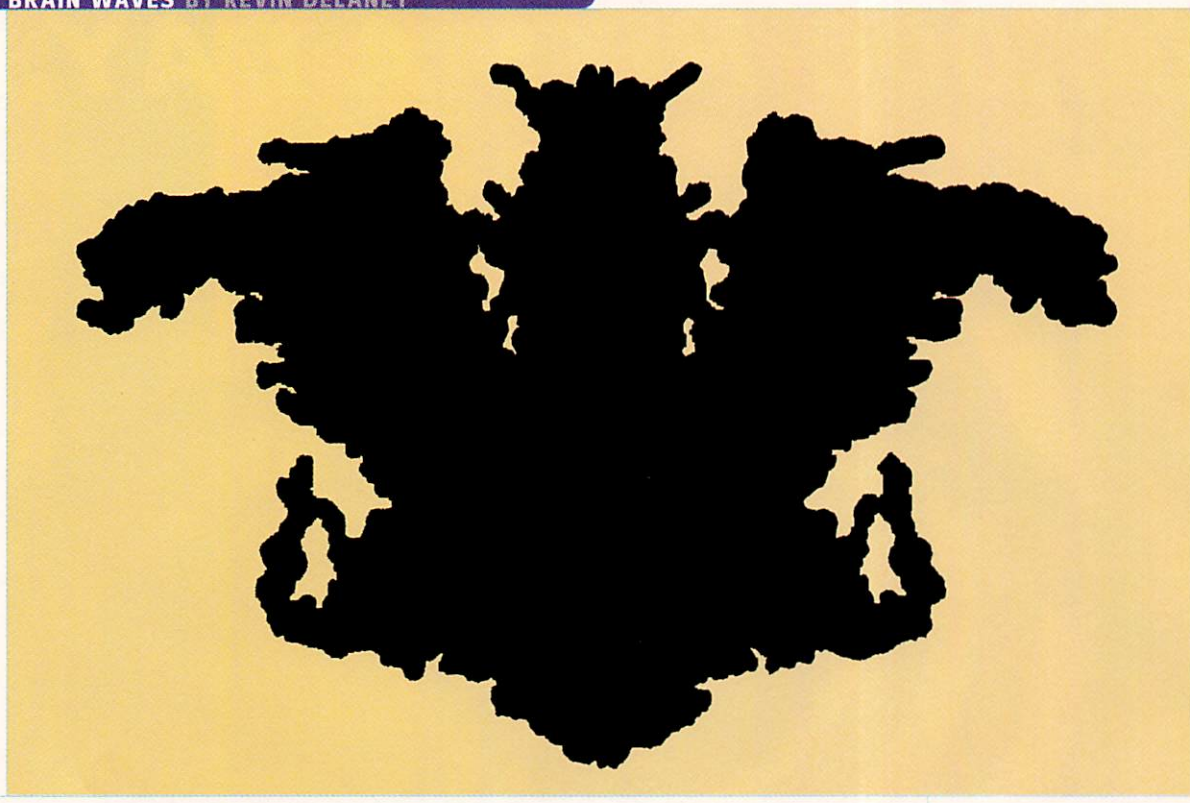
BRAIN WAVES BY KEVIN DELANEY



SURFER, KNOW THYSELF!

Do you play well with others? Take an e-personality test and find out

Ever since Rorschach first spilled his ink, personality tests of every stripe have been a favorite of psychologists, human resources departments, and women's magazines. Now such exams are all over cyberspace, thanks to the ease with which one can click on answers and instantly retrieve an evaluation.

All tests are not created equal. On the more serious side are examples such as **The Keirsey Temperament Sorter II [advisorteam.com/user/ktsintro.asp]** (which categorizes you as one of four types—or, for a fee, 16 subtypes) and the Profiler at **Organizational Diagnostics Online [od-online.com/webpage/intro.html]** (which assesses such traits as extroversion and openness to experience).

If you don't have 20 minutes to spend determining your "driving personality"—one of numerous profiles available at **Queendom.com: Personality Tests [queendom.com/tests/personality]**—try one of the site's five-minute quickies on a topic such as road rage. Or choose your favorite graphic at **Personality Test [users.rcn.com/zang.interport/personality.html]**, which yields immediate insights that might otherwise require years of expensive psychotherapy.

The Quiz Builder at **QuizBox [quizbox.com]** lets you generate your own test and make it available to the masses—which sounds really cool in theory, until you sample the 50,000 or so entries posted by fellow surfers. Most seem to have been authored by folks who spend a lot of time in chatrooms. Hmm...could it be that the kind of personality test a person creates is actually the clearest window into one's soul?

SOCIAL SCIENCES

ANTHROPOLOGY

START HERE

Anthro Tech: Anthropology Ever fantasized about traipsing into the Amazon jungle to encounter remote Indian tribes? Or maybe you prefer to study human behavior from the sheltered perspective of your local Starbucks. Regardless, this well-organized index breaks down the vast field of anthropology into specialized areas of research. It also lists job opportunities, conferences, and discussion forums. Most links are rated for quality. **[vlib.anthrotech.com]**

THE OCCULT

NO MACHETE NECESSARY

Anthropology Resources on the Internet Here's a good gateway with clear-cut paths to academic and field studies. Check the news page for a global perspective on cultural controversies. **[home.worldnet.fr/~clist/Anthro/Contents/contents.html]**

SMALL WORLD

Anthro.net There are countless places to go, people to meet, and sites to visit at Anthro.net, which covers topics and time periods ranging from ancient civilizations to modern feminism. Each category brings up reams of research papers and loads of additional links. Click on What Is Anthropology? to proceed to the official site of the American Anthropological Association. **[anthro.net]**

TRIBAL SECRETS

About: Anthropology Curious about how to shrink a head? Guide Alexander F. Christensen provides another good starting point not only for serious research, but also for playful forays. Be forewarned, though: The Sinhalese love charm takes a full 12 hours to formulate and comes with no guarantees. **[anthropology.about.com]** ANN FARMER

DIVINATION

CHINESE ORACLE

Yi Jing, Book of the Moon The true function of divination is to foster an enhanced understanding of present conditions so that users can affect their own futures. Based on chance operations resulting in 64 possible combinations of broken and solid lines, the Yi Jing (also translated as "I Ching") has been consulted for centuries in China by everyone from statesmen to shopkeepers. At this site, LiSe's elegant guide provides an excellent introduction to the ancient oracle. **[www.aheyboer.com/yi_index.html]**

IN THE CARDS

Learning the Tarot The Western world's counterpart to the I Ching is the "royal road," the 78 cards that make up a tarot deck. Joan Bunning's cross-referenced free lessons include guides to the meaning of individual cards, instructions on how to lay out various spreads, and sample readings. **[learntarot.com]**

INTERACTIVE READINGS

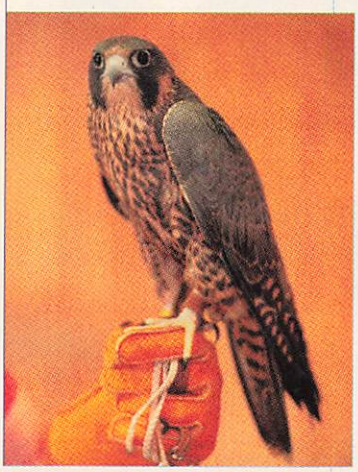
Facade Craving a quick oracular fix? Here's the place to visit for instant gratification, delivered via tarot cards, runes, the I Ching, and biorhythm readings. You can also buy tarot decks here. **[facade.com]** FRANK GREEN

NATURAL SCIENCE

ENDANGERED SPECIES

GOING, GOING, GONE?

ES2000 Industrial development and the steady growth of the world's human population threaten plant and wildlife habitats. Read about individual endangered species, get to know them up close and personal in the multimedia gallery, and learn how you can help them stick around. **[library.thinkquest.org/25014/english.index.shtml]**



SUCCESS STORY

Discovery.com: Return of the Falcon; Dominion: FalconTrak In 1970, after disappearing habitat and DDT had reduced the U.S. population of peregrines to near extinction, the world's fastest bird was added to the endangered species list. Return of the Falcon documents the success of the captive-breeding program, which initially involved seducing the male into mating with a falconesque hat worn by a human. Using satellite technology, FalconTrak lets you monitor the progress of newborn falcons conceived in the usual way. **[discovery.com/news/features/falcon/falcon.html]; [dom.com/about/environment/falcon]**

YOUNG PROTECTORS

Kids' Planet For better or worse, our children will inherit the world we leave behind. Kids' Planet offers information and encouragement, helping youngsters to address some problems now. **[kidsplanet.org]**

LORENA HAVENS, CARL FRANZ

EXPERT OPINION

KID CORRESPONDENT MELANIE ZUCH

At 13, Melanie Zuch has a gold-star résumé: She has, for example, interviewed Regis Philbin, host of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, for a story, which you can find at **Weekly Reader: Galaxy: Field Trip [www.weeklyreader.com/features/ftripmil.html]**. The New York City eighth-grader sharpens her skills at these sites:

AOL: HOMEWORK HELP

I like that it has many references all in one site: dictionaries and a thesaurus and encyclopedias. **[AOL Kids Only button]**

MAMAMEDIA.COM

MaMaMedia is really for younger kids, but people my age like the puzzles and games here, too. **[mamamedia.com]**

HARRY POTTER

You can actually enroll in Hogwarts, the school that Harry attends. **[harrypotter.com]**

UPROAR

My mother says no TV and no games before I finish my homework. When I do finish, I come to Uproar to play games. **[uproar.com]**

FALCON: MICHAEL MELFORD INC./GETTYONE

WE TEST ONE CATEGORY IN DEPTH...ENVELOPES, PLEASE BY ALAN COHEN

BEST JOB-HUNTING SITES

Maybe that sure thing wasn't. Or you're just out of school. Whatever the reason, you're looking for a job. We'd like to tell you to look no further, but it's not quite that easy. While our Gold Star sites can guide you, you've still got some legwork to do.

Keep in mind we said *some*. The best career sites can greatly ease your burden. Sure, you'll find job listings, but you'll also get the inside scoop about prospective employers. At the top hubs, such as **Monster.com** and **HotJobs [hotjobs.com]**, you can add your résumé to a database that employers search for new talent, but use privacy settings to keep your identity secret until you're ready to reveal it. Other sites help you gear up for overseas work and get the lowdown on salaries.

The Web is no longer there simply to supplement an offline job search. Instead, it's your 24/7 command post. Most firms now advertise job openings right on their own sites, fueling the growth of such companies as **FlipDog.com**, which crawls the Web for postings and collects them in one place. You'll also find niche sites devoted to specific occupations, from law enforcement to nursing to journalism (our visit was strictly for research). So put down those classifieds and log on. We've got some work for you.

AND THE WINNERS ARE . . .

BEST OVERALL JOB-HUNTING SITE

MONSTER.COM **[monster.com]**

With almost half a million jobs to choose from, it's easy to lose sight of Monster's real trump card: the great resources it offers beyond the listings. Where other hubs reprint an article or two, or link you to a site that provides job-hunting tips, Monster boasts its own squad of experts who patrol the site's very active message boards and will even critique your résumé. Sample cover letters show you how to make a good introduction (never say anything negative about your present employer); virtual interviews put you in the (mock) hot seat. You'll learn how—and when—to write a thank-you note. We think Monster earns one of those, too.

BEST EXECUTIVE SITE

WSJ.COM: CAREERJOURNAL **[careerjournal.com]**

Even a top dog can get restless (or

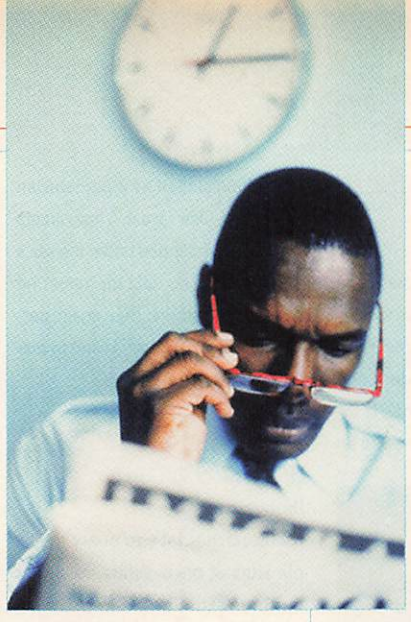
laid off). When that happens, turn in the limousine but keep the laptop. You'll need it to use CareerJournal, a terrific trove of tips, information, and—this is key—jobs. You'll find no opportunities at Wendy's here (except, maybe, to run it), but you *will* find plenty of management positions in aerospace, technology, and other high-profile fields, in such companies as Citibank and Merrill Lynch. Thanks to the site's pedigree—it's part of the WSJ.com family—you'll have access to ads that appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, and you'll also get top-notch content on such issues as employment contracts, headhunters, and negotiating stock options.

BEST HIGH-TECH JOBS

DICE.COM **[dice.com]**

With a style best described as early programmer, Dice looks the part. And for engineers, coders, systems administrators, and Web developers, this is the go-to place for jobs. Dice's database of more than 78,000 positions dwarfs our runner-up site, ComputerJobs.com, and it returned the most gigs in every search we did. True, last year we gave the nod to ComputerJobs, arguing that it was easier to use. But Dice has made significant progress since then, organizing jobs by metro area and letting surfers search by area code, employment status (full-time or contract), and even by jobs that let you telecommute. There's also handy data on salaries for different specialties.

PEOPLE: HOLLY HARRIS/GETTYONE; NEWSPAPER: EYEWIRE/GETTYONE



BEST EMPLOYER INFO

VAULT [vault.com]

Want to know what ticks employees off, and what makes them happy, at that company you're about to join? Vault's boards contain more than 260,000 messages—many with invaluable insider details—about technology companies, investment banks, startups, and even staid brick-and-mortar retailers. Find out about salaries at the big law firms, and what sort of hours you'll be working there (long). If you're mulling over an offer from Microsoft, you may need to take a sick day to read all the whining and boasting in dozens of topic threads. The rants aren't always pretty, and sometimes they're extremely biased, but this is a good way to access information you're unlikely to get from your recruiter.

BEST EQUAL OPPORTUNITY SITE

IMDIVERSITY.COM [imdiversity.com]

It may have fewer listings—way fewer—than HotJobs and Monster. But IMDiversity members include such corporate titans as Boeing, General Motors, Pfizer, and Starbucks, along with such academic institutions as Johns Hopkins and such government entities as the National Security Agency. The site's multicultural "villages" (there's one for women, as well as some for African, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American people) offer tips for breaking down walls, and getting help when things turn ugly. Profiles and articles provide perspective on how far workplace equality has come—and how much further it needs to go.

REPORT CARD » GRADING THE TOP JOB-HUNTING SITES

THE LEADERS	THE LISTINGS	CONFIDENTIALITY	COUNSELING/TOOLS	EXTRAS/CAVEATS	OVERALL
MONSTER.COM	A- 450,000 jobs, strong on big companies (202 gigs at Microsoft). Can search by state, city, keyword, or company—but HotJobs is better organized.	A Can opt to keep name, employer, and contact info hidden when résumé is viewed; queries forwarded by site, so your e-mail address stays private.	A+ Store five résumés, five cover letters, and five search agents that notify you about jobs. Résumé samples, tips; practice interviews; loads more.	A First-rate résumé builder; frequent chats; active forums; Monster Talent Market for freelancers. Powers AOL career channel. Skimpy employer profiles.	A
HOTJOBS [hotjobs.com]	B+ 160,000 jobs, organized into multiple channels. Can search by occupation, keyword, location, company. Many high-profile employers (Amazon, Dell).	A Can keep résumé public but block up to 20 companies (or keep it private and block everyone). Headhunters not allowed to search database.	B- Store one résumé, unlimited search agents. Articles from FastCompany.com, USNews.com, Salary.com; skimpy city profiles.	B+ Edit your résumé, contact info, after applying for a job, and site notifies employer. Message boards; career expos in many cities. Scant employer info.	B+
FLIPDOG.COM	A- Over 580,000 jobs, pulled from company Web sites. When it finds jobs, it grabs them all (979 at Microsoft). But it misses some sites completely.	B- No way to keep parts of résumé hidden while the rest is visible. But can opt for a searchable profile with no identifying info, and site will route queries.	C If you're looking for bells and whistles, look elsewhere. Links to good resources; can store one résumé, one cover letter, and five search agents.	C+ No résumé-building tool; must cut-and-paste an old résumé or type in a new one. Skimpy employer information. Does good job of updating listings.	B
YAHOO! CAREERS [careers.yahoo.com]	B- 250,000 jobs, from Headhunter.net. Search results can be screwy (search for $75K job turned up $20K gigs). Yahoo!'s own jobs posted on Monster.	C Résumé is either public (it can turn up in searches by employers) or private (it won't turn up in searches, but you can e-mail it). If public, all information is visible.	B+ Can store five résumés, unlimited search agents; salary calculator; decent collection of articles, tips, from other sites (including Vault and CareerJournal).	B Quiet message boards. Integration with Yahoo! both good (links to Yahoo! Experts for advice) and bad (listings not linked to company boards).	B-
JOBOPTIONS [joboptions.com]	C 70,000 jobs. Search results vary wildly: No Microsoft listings, hundreds from AT&T. A search for writing jobs turned up a gig writing Keno tickets.	B- No way to keep parts of résumé hidden while the rest is visible. But can opt for a searchable profile with no identifying info, and site will route queries.	B+ Can store three résumés, three search agents. Substantive Career Zone with many (if brief) tips on negotiation, résumé writing, interviewing, and more.	D Can't search by company; results often inaccurate (a search for California jobs turned up posts in Florida and Arizona). Many listings were months old.	C

HOW WE RATED THE SITES: To assess the quantity and diversity of job posts, as well as the ease (or difficulty) of finding them, we searched for multiple occupations and locations at each site. We also looked at the level of privacy provided for posting résumés and factored in any additional resources and tools. Testing took place in May 2001; grades do not reflect any enhancements since then.

M. MEYER/PHOTONICA

BEST JOB-HUNT TUTORIAL

THE RILEY GUIDE

[rileyguide.com]

For someone who seems happy in her work, Margaret Dikel sure spends a lot of time checking out career sites. Her own site, the Riley Guide (a nod to Margaret's maiden name), is required surfing for anyone new to an Internet-based job hunt. Learn how to create an electronic résumé for easy e-mailing, and how to use newsgroups and mailing lists to network. A superb directory links to sites that can help you negotiate, handle inappropriate interview questions, and land the best references. One site even lists dog-friendly employers—handy if you want Fido with you.

BEST SALARY INFORMATION

SALARY.COM **[salary.com]**

A little knowledge of salaries can help you avoid that true workplace horror: discovering that the guy in the next office does the same work for twice the pay. Salary.com compiles compensation data on more than 1,200 jobs, so you can check pay ranges by occupation and location and bring along a bit of ammunition when you start negotiating. You can compare earnings by specialty, too, so if you've got hefty medical school loans, you'll pay them off faster as a urologist ($223,000 median pay in Springfield, Illinois) than as a pediatrician ($132,000). One caveat: A few careers seem to have slipped under the site's radar. There's no data for magazine writers, for example. Then again, perhaps Salary.com doesn't want to discourage future journalists.

BEST JOB METASEARCHING

HOOVER'S ONLINE

[hoovers.com]

Metasearches let you query multiple sites at once. While no single engine retrieves every job site, Hoover's covers the most ground—and hits bigger sites, too, such as HotJobs and CareerJournal (no Monster, alas). It also links you to posts on many company sites, such as Apple Computer, Bloomberg, and Motorola. True, you can often do more narrowly tailored searches on individual sites. But with job hunting eating up so much of your time, here's a quick way to save some.

BEST OVERSEAS JOBS

MONSTER GLOBAL GATEWAY

[globalgateway.monster.com]

If you're looking for work in an exotic locale, the Global Gateway links you to jobs around the world. It also gets you up to speed on visa requirements, the top multinational companies, and the local ambience in the places you're considering. You'll pick up useful facts (tax rates in New Zealand), along with tips on getting along in your new environment (did you know you should never raise your voice at work in Singapore?). All told, there are more than 450,000 jobs waiting to be filled, in such spots as South Africa, Germany, Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, and Australia. Hey, if Crocodile Dundee can get work here, you can certainly get work there. ■

A CLOSER LOOK: CAREER-SPECIFIC SITES

Walk into any Kmart and you can buy a bike helmet, but for the best selection, you'd want to visit a bike shop, right? Sites devoted to specific careers serve up not only jobs but also advice on breaking into the field and getting ahead. And there's a staggering array of them, for nurses, carpenters, accountants—heck, if your profession lacks an online outpost, it needs a serious public awareness campaign. **The Riley Guide [rileyguide.com]** provides an A–Z index of occupational sites. Here are some house favorites:

LAWENFORCEMENTJOB.COM

[lawenforcementjob.com]

There are more cops here than at a Yankees World Series game, patrolling the message boards and offering up advice on promotions, exams, and getting through that rookie year (not the Yankee kind). Links take you to recruitment pages for hundreds of law enforcement organizations, from the NYPD to small-town sheriff departments to university security. There are jobs galore (Sycamore, Illinois, is looking for a new chief) and all sorts of insider info (no more height requirement at the LAPD). If you're just looking to supplement your *Law & Order* habit, you'll find a wealth of fascinating reading, like the posts about NYPD "cadaver dogs" that sniff out bodies.

MEDIABISTRO.COM

[mediabistro.com]

Beyond jobs from brand-name employers, there's news (much of it sobering, with headlines like "So Long, Golden Age of Web Freelancing"). Additionally, in a field where your contacts can prove as crucial as your talent, Mediabistro helps make the introductions, hosting offline events in New York, Los Angeles, Boston, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and even London. Get the story here.

COOLWORKS.COM

[www.coolworks.com]

If you never wanted to leave Six Flags Great Adventure, now you can go back—and stay a while. Maybe even work some levers on the Viper. CoolWorks doesn't know from cubicles; you're going to earn your keep on the rides, in the river, at the campground, or on the slopes. True, some of the offerings don't quite live up to *cool;* "Grounds Quality" is just a fancy way of saying trash removal. But as we toil under the harsh fluorescent glare, categories such as "jobs on water" sure sound appealing. So does that ski resort gig in Telluride, and that open slot at Cowboy Village Resort. For trade: Aeron chair for bus fare.

LAW.COM CAREER CENTER

[www.lawjobs.com]

We've never equated the legal profession with cutting-edge style, but darn it if Law.com doesn't have the nicest-looking job posts on the Web. Listings come from the firms, the government, and companies looking for in-house counsel and support staff. The site also points you to recruitment pages at the big firms' sites (useful for those still in school). Once you get that job, be sure to come back: Law.com can help you find an expert witness or a court reporter, and makes it easy to catch up on legal news.

LARRY DALE GORDON/GETTYONE

Japanese girls

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 103

problem, are kids who rarely leave their rooms or talk to others, sometimes communicating with family members only through written notes. Occasionally reclusiveness spirals into lurid excess. In a tale that swept the nation, a teenage boy hikikomori didn't leave his room for years; when his parents finally broke down the door, they discovered that he'd kept a girl imprisoned with him all the while. "Hikikomori spend all their time on the computer or playing video games," Mori says. "They disappear into technology."

Japan can be a conservative place with a rigid, slow-moving hierarchy. But at the same time, it is also true that, in the words of MP3.com founder Michael Robertson, "there may not be a culture that adores technology more than Japan." Historians such as Edwin O. Reischauer note that Japan, isolated until the 1850s, viewed science and technology as the way to catch up with the West—a lesson that was further driven home by the Second World War. "The destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki tended to teach Americans and Europeans that the excesses of technology were bad," says Frederik L. Schodt, a Silicon Valley translator who is the author of *Inside the Robot Kingdom,* one of the first books about the Japanese embrace of the future. "Whereas in Japan one of the messages was that Japan did not have enough technology." In addition, the texture of Japanese life is surprisingly impermanent. Tokyo was almost totally destroyed in 1923 (by an earthquake), 1944–45 (by U.S. bombing), and the 1980s (by real-estate speculation). Each time, rebuilding in the newest, shiniest style was taken as a demonstration of economic might. The combined result, perhaps, is a world view in which consumerism and technology play an even more prominent role than they do in the U. S.

"After the war, we lost everything, right?" says Tatsuya Mat- was "not just surprised, but *very* surprised" by its success. "Maybe American children are becoming more like Japanese children," he says. "It's possible that we were just a little ahead."

ONOE HAD COME FROM HACHIOJI, AN HOUR'S TRAIN RIDE FROM TOKYO. She wore pigtails and a floppy hat made from blue jeans and plaid high-water pants and an inch-wide black belt intended for a man with a 50-inch waistline that she wrapped several times around her narrow hips. The belt was studded, and in white letters down its length ran the talismanic name of John Travolta.

When Mizutani appeared, it didn't bother Onoe—she was used to the idea that fashion photographers walked up to girls on the street and took their pictures. About five years ago, a lot of Japanese fashion editors realized that what the Tokyo girls were doing on their own was so much more inventive than what the Paris designers were doing in ateliers that they mostly gave up filling magazines with the traditional models in $5,000 dresses and simply sent people with cameras to neighborhoods like Shibuya and Harajuku and Yoyogi. Instead of instructing readers from on high, these magazines act more like community bulletin boards, telling kids what clothes the other kids are wearing.

"The girls who read us don't need suggestions," says Hiroko Nukatani, editor of *Cutie,* a thick bimonthly that is one of the stable of magazines put out by Takarajimasha, a kind of Japanese version of Condé Nast. "In fashion, culture, technology, anything, they pick what they want and they're not afraid of it." Nukatani has watched American marketers come to Tokyo and be astounded to see...*girls buying computer games.* "It's amazing to them," she says. "The girls have no allergy to these devices.

of Shisaka "Au- el in Japan that are such groups hich are among el's big summer ı, an assortment le by two women ys worked with mura says, "The e rock stars and ng is to have fun. ?"

y Booka or Ben- willingness to try atsui's futuristic crophone on the bursts out laugh- ne and try it out. ng, they are truly ks.

ke them in just

ce by Saiko Matsuda.

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While Supplies Last

Exit Strategy CONTINUED FROM PAGE 109

"Four!" added Benjamin.

"Three and a half," I joked, crossing over to him. "So, did you trash my laptop?"

"Come on, Jamie," Benjamin protested in all seriousness. "I know what I'm doing, right, Jude?"

Jude winked at him, knowingly. The boy beamed.

I put my hands on Benjamin's shoulders. "I know you do. I know you do." It was a little strange how quickly Jude had usurped my role. I wasn't sure which bothered me more, the risk that Benjamin would be corrupted by my former friends, or that I'd lose the boy's respect in the process.

"The coffee and stuff is for you guys, you know," I said, pointing to a small chrome cart near the door, with two severe, cylindrical black plastic urns and an octagonal plate of cookies. Everyone looked over at the cart. "I mean, it's what they do here when someone from the real world comes to visit."

"So that's what *they* do," Jude said, putting two cookies in a preposterously designed square teacup and then pouring coffee over them. "Want some coffee, Reuben?"

"No, thanks," he answered, examining one of the cup's corners. "On principle."

"Let's get on with this before we're interrupted," I said.

"Sure thing," Jude began. "What we've got here is a prototype, mind you."

"Don't worry," I said. "Most of the stuff they fund here never even gets that far."

Reuben was still inspecting the china. "Not surprising."

"Well," Jude said. "Let's see what *they* think of this."

He hit a few keystrokes on my laptop, which brought up a simple splash screen: TeslaNet.

"It's loading," Reuben explained. "That will happen faster."

"Okay, Benjamin," Jude ordered. "Launch it on that one, too."

Benjamin opened a second laptop at the other end of the table, and started up the same program.

"Now," Jude said in the voice of a carny, "you'd think these computers would need to be networked in order to communicate with each other."

"If they were communicating, they would be networked by definition," I responded in alpha-geek.

"Yeah. But you'd need them to be connected, right? Through a phone line, network line, infrared, or some kind of network, right?"

"Sure."

"Well, watch this." Jude held a simple piece of wire with an alligator clip on either end. "Remember Tesla's experiments with static electricity and ground? How he thought he could light up the Eastern Seaboard with a big coil, and that no one would need any electric wires?"

"Yeah?"

"TeslaNet uses ground to establish network connections," Jude said. "One end attaches to your laptop." He clasped one of the clips to a screw in the back of my laptop. "And the other, to ground." He attached the other end of the wire to the metal plate over a light switch. Benjamin worked simultaneously, attaching a wire on his computer to the metal window frame.

"Now watch," Reuben said. I had forgotten that way he had of standing with his arms clasped over his chest, as if to demonstrate he was so confident in the technology that he wouldn't be called upon to touch the keyboard.

The screen changed to a simple Unix prompt.

"And?" I asked.

"Go ahead, Benjamin," Jude said.

Benjamin typed into his keyboard.

Magically, words appeared on the other laptop:

Chat request, user 17014. Accept? (y/n)

I typed Y. The screen changed to a simple chat interface.

Hello, cousin. How's it hanging?

"That's incredible!" I said. It was. "It goes both ways?"

"Indeed." Reuben allowed himself a smile. "It's using TCP/IP protocol. Just through ground, that's all."

"You mean the computers are connected because they're basically touching each other through the metal in this room, right? They're communicating through the grounding wires?"

"Essentially," Reuben agreed. "But they're actually able to communicate through ground itself. Over vast distances."

"Right," Jude said. "You could as easily hook up to a drainpipe, or a stake planted directly into the soil."

"Anyone grounded is in the network," Reuben explained proudly. "As long as they're using the software. It automatically finds you a unique address when you log on."

"Jesus." I was awed. "But can you use it to get onto the Internet?"

"That's the beauty of it, Jamie," Reuben said. "As long as one node on TeslaNet is connected to the Internet, then the whole network is. The minute any major server like a university, search engine, or access provider installs TeslaNet, we'll have more than enough bandwidth to support millions of TeslaNet users."

"But that's not the point," Jude interrupted, almost angrily. "The power here is that with TeslaNet, we don't need an Internet. It replaces the Internet. There are no centralized servers. Everyone is connected as soon as they touch their computers to the ground. Most of the time that just means plugging into the wall outlet, and most computers are plugged in already. If you're outside or using batteries, you just put a wire into the ground. Should even be able to work with a cell phone—we're working on a port. It'll work with anything. The earth itself is the network. The more people who use it, the stronger the network and the vaster the distances we can traverse. And it's absolutely uncontrollable."

I looked at my computer, the green wire connecting it to the light switch, and the flashing message on the screen. I didn't know what emotion to have. Greed? Joy? Jealousy? Excitement? Fear? This could be a billion-dollar technology. Unless it can't get patented. In that case, it would just kill a dozen other billion-dollar technologies, like Internet Access Providers, the phone companies, the satellite industry. That would make it revolutionary. Or catastrophic. ■

Douglas Rushkoff, a *Y-Life* contributing writer, is the author of seven novels. *Exit Strategy*, serialized weekly at yil.com/exitstrategy, is soon to be published in both electronic and print versions.

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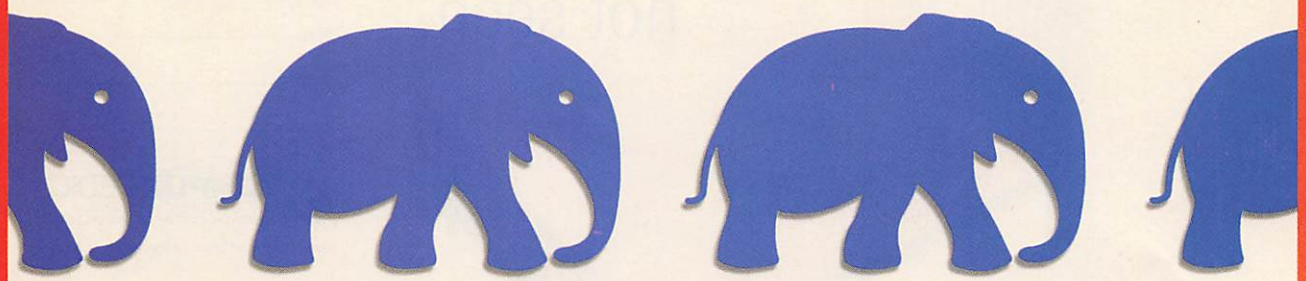

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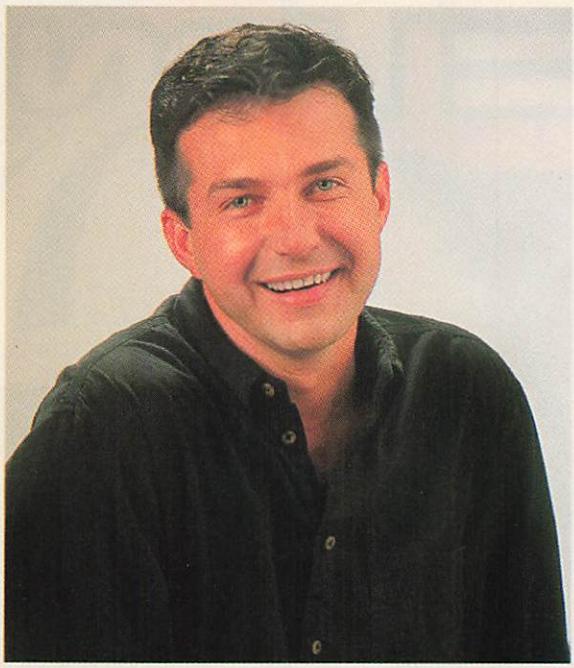

"I had won $52,975.77! Wow - I'm a rich man!"
says Olivier C., regular at Lucky Nugget Online Casino
Visit www.luckynugget.com/today

The year 1849 marked the beginning of the Great American Gold Rush. Some struck it rich. But for most there was just thirst, heat, dirty, double-crossing claim jumpers and a rattlesnake under every rock. And sweat. After all, the gold didn't exactly jump out of the ground and into your pocket.

These days, fortune hunters have a far easier time of it - courtesy of Lucky Nugget Online Casino.

Lucky Nugget is modelled on one of the many gold mines that sprang up at that time, and the state-of-the-art programming beautifully recreates the atmosphere of the period. More practically, your security and privacy are guaranteed; it's easy to use, friendly, VERY entertaining and promises you all the excitement you can handle – minus the shoot-outs and cave-ins, of course. What's more Lucky Nugget gamers, true to the name of the site, seem to strike it lucky more often than most.

LUCKY, LUCKY WINNERS

Lucky Nugget's reputation for more than its fair share of big winners is well founded, attracting gamers from well beyond the shores of America. And the stories of gamers who have struck it rich at Lucky Nugget, combined with the rich atmosphere of the Gold Rush days makes playing there an exciting and heady experience. Olivier C. is one of the many Lucky Nugget gamers who took the time to write and share their experiences:

"Thank you to everyone at Lucky Nugget casino for helping me to hit the jackpot – it was wonderful! This is how I did it. Very simple! I clicked on "Bet Max". It started to spin... and spin. Then came the Fiesta sign .. the second .. and the THIRD! Bingo ... a little music and a message box appeared. In seconds my heart speed had increased from 60 to 180 pulses/min. I had won $52,975.77! Wow – I'm a rich man!"

Satisfied customers don't come much more satisfied than that! Visit the website and you'll find dozens of other authenticated messages from equally happy gamers displayed on Lucky Nugget's noticeboard.

There are no membership or download fees at Lucky Nugget, payouts are pegged at Las Vegas levels OR BETTER, and winnings are paid within 72 hours.

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Plus, as a bonus, Lucky Nugget offers new players a **$110 FREE*** stake when they first check on as a Real player. You can stake the free* $110 as if it was your own cash – with no limit to your possible winnings. It might even see you hitting the mother lode, and winning a fortune on CashSplash; the biggest progressive jackpot on the net - with payouts to-date totalling an enormous **$22 million.** Now that's winning!

To stake your claim to a fortune at Lucky Nugget, and join those who have already struck gold, mosey on down to your faithful computer, boot the old girl up, and head for:

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And while you're there, make sure you check out what they've got to offer games-wise. There are more than 30 games to choose from – so the chances are pretty good that you'll find all your old favorites – plus, maybe, a few new ones. Your choice includes slots, poker, blackjack, roulette and a lot more.

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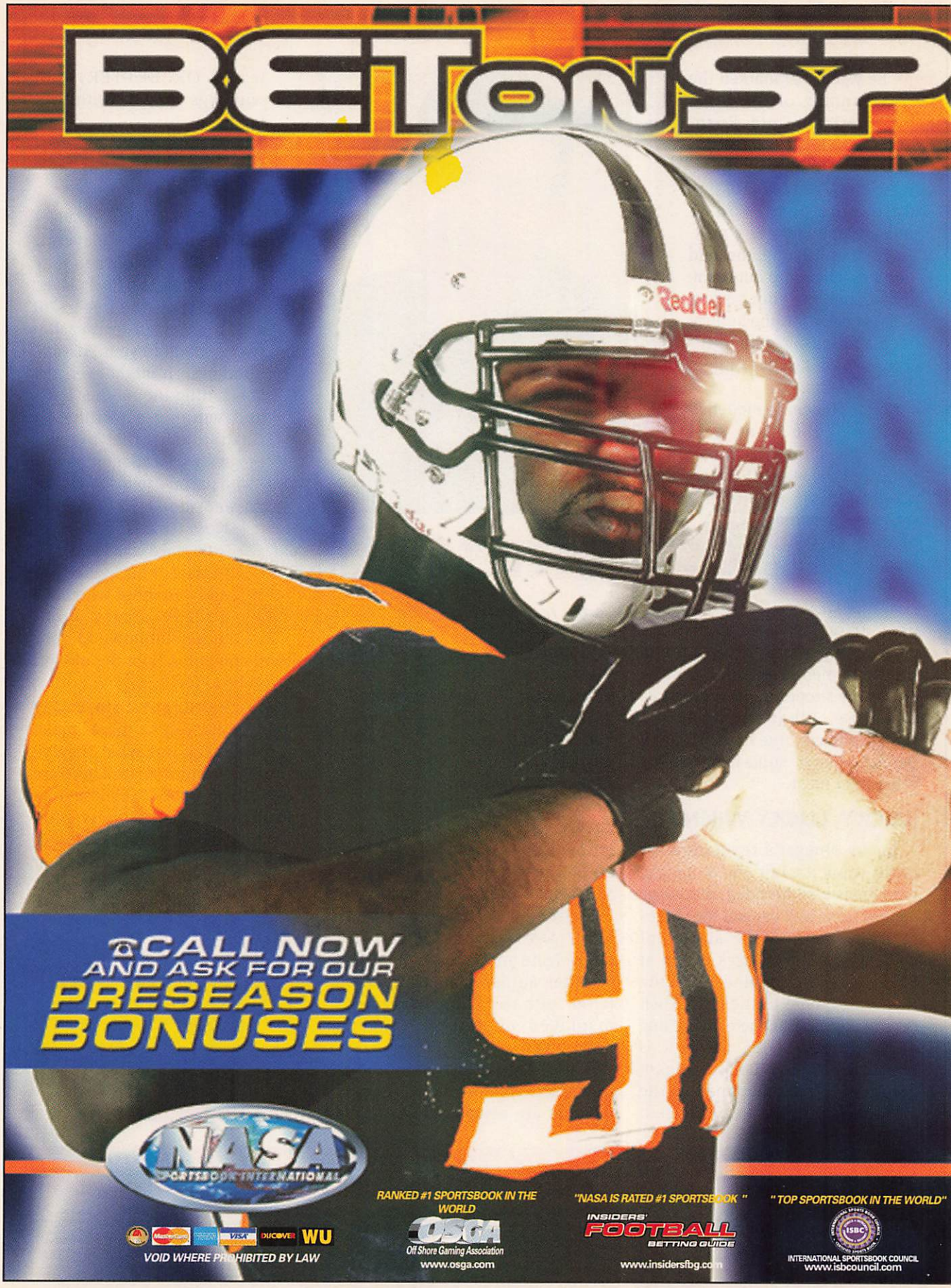
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PS PRETTY STRANGE

The Net has no mouth, but it must scream
BY SCOTT ALEXANDER

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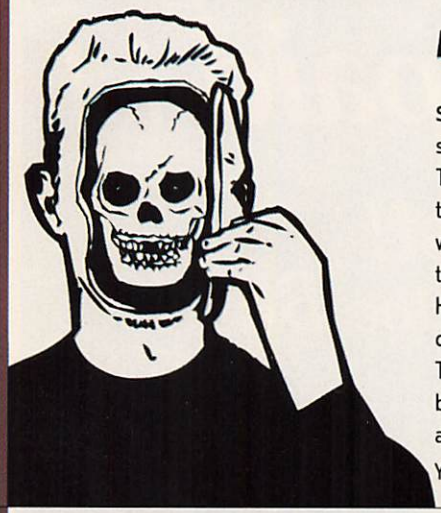
WHAT WAS THAT SOUND YOU HEARD OUTSIDE the window? A distraction, of course. When you turn back around, a burger and fries have appeared. How did they get there? And how did that burger get so juicy? Ninja Burger has honed the ancient traditions of *Ninjutsu* in the service of a greater goal—delivery in 30 minutes or less ("or we commit seppuku"). Alas, owing to "stupid FDA regulations," the Samurai Chicken no longer contains real samurai. **[ninjaburger.com]**

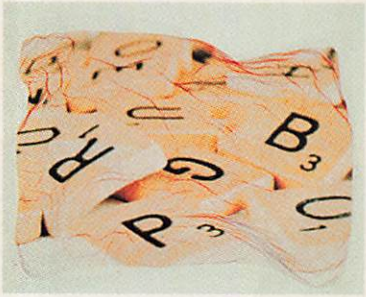


MODERN LIVING

SOME WOULD SAY CREATING 90-PLUS ANIMATED self-portraits on the Web indicates a Donald Trump level of narcissism. But when the portraits are this delightfully cracked, our minds wander into Woody Allen territory (in the traditional sense, not the Soon-Yi-dating sense). Join H. Hoogerbrugge as he levitates (not too well), disco-dances, scratches, and exorcises demons. To quote him: "I have no idea what I am saying, but I do know I say things you don't understand, and if you do understand what I am saying then you are wrong." **[www.hoogerbrugge.com]**

BAD SCRABBLE HANDS

WHAT DOES *LLLJWZQ* MEAN TO YOU? IF you're not grimacing in sympathetic agony, we can assume you're not a Scrabble player. *LLLJWZQ* is only one of the worst tile "hands" you could possibly be dealt. Almost as awful is *QTTNNEF*. Or try losing combination *TBEEOAA* on for size. There are enough unfortunate lexicographic combos here to give William Safire nightmares for weeks. Scream all you want—the site will make more. **[heybro.com/badscrabble]**



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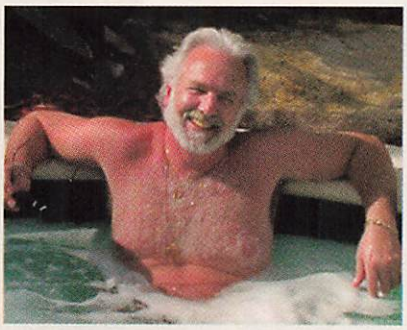

MEN WHO LOOK LIKE KENNY ROGERS

WHO SHOT KENNY? DOZENS OF HUNTERS, ALL TO SHOW OFF THEIR PRIZES AT MWLLKR. If you've never shot (okay, we mean photographed) a Kenny before, the site offers practical tips for first-timers who want to shoot KLAs (Kenny Look-Alikes) in the wild. Experts, whatever their preferred hunting grounds—Waffle House, the Home Depot, or Kmart's sporting goods department—will find handy techniques such as telling their prey he looks like Uncle Bernie and asking to take his picture. Avoid agitating these sensitive and noble beasts (whose numbers have been decimated since the '80s, when they roamed majestically); they're an essential part of our national heritage. **[menwholooklikekennyrogers.com]**

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- AMIGOINGDOWN.COM | amigoingdown.com
- SWAPCASH.COM | swapcash.com
- SWIMMERS GUIDE | lornet.com/sgol

SPECIAL EVENTS: POWWOWS

- POWWOWS.COM | powwows.com
- COUNCIL TREE POW WOW AND CULTURAL FESTIVAL | counciltreepowwow.org
- GATHERING OF NATIONS | gatheringofnations.com

OUTDOORS: RIVER RAFTING

- WHITE WATER RAFTING ADVENTURE COMPANIES | rafting-whitewater.com
- ADVENTURE FOR A LIFETIME | earthriver.com
- WHITE WATER RAFTING: VICTORIA FALLS | zambezi.com/raft.html

DESTINATIONS: THE OUTER BANKS

- NORTH CAROLINA'S OUTER BANKS | outer-banks.com
- THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE: CAPE HATTERAS | www.nps.gov/caha/capehatteras.htm
- BLACKBEARD! | ocracoke-nc.com/blackbeard

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MONEY MATTERS: BUYING A LITTLE SECURITY

- BONDDESK.COM | www.bonddesk.com

REAL ESTATE: MORTGAGES

- E-LOAN | e-loan.com
- MORTGAGE-CALC.COM | www.mortgage-calc.com
- MYFICO | myfico.com
- AARP: REVERSE MORTGAGES | www.aarp.org/revmort

PERSONAL FINANCE: MONEY SAVERS

- THE DOLLAR STRETCHER | stretcher.com
- ABOUT: FRUGAL LIVING | frugalliving.about.com

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BRAINWAVES: SURFER, KNOW THYSELF!

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- ORGANIZATIONAL DIAGNOSTICS ONLINE | od-online.com/webpage/intro.htm
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EXPERT OPINION: KID CORRESPONDENT MELANIE ZUCH

- WEEKLY READER: GALAXY: FIELD TRIP | www.weeklyreader.com/features/ftripmil.html
- MAMAMEDIA.COM | mamamedia.com
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- UPROAR | uproar.com

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THE OCCULT: DIVINATION

- YI JING, BOOK OF THE MOON | www.aheyboer.com/yi_index.html
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- FACADE | facade.com

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- DOMINION: FALCONTRAK | dom.com/about/environment/falcon
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- HOTJOBS | hotjobs.com
- FLIPDOG.COM | flipdog.com
- WSJ.COM: CAREERJOURNAL | careerjournal.com
- DICE.COM | dice.com
- VAULT | vault.com
- IMDIVERSITY.COM | imdiversity.com
- THE RILEY GUIDE | rileyguide.com
- SALARY.COM | salary.com
- HOOVER'S ONLINE | hoovers.com
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A CLOSER LOOK: CAREER-SPECIFIC SITES

- THE RILEY GUIDE | rileyguide.com
- LAWENFORCEMENTJOB.COM | lawenforcementjob.com
- MEDIABISTRO.COM | mediabistro.com
- COOLWORKS.COM | www.coolworks.com
- LAW.COM CAREER CENTER | www.lawjobs.com

REPORT CARD: GRADING THE TOP JOB-HUNTING SITES

- MONSTER.COM | monster.com
- HOTJOBS | hotjobs.com
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- YAHOO! CAREERS | careers.yahoo.com
- JOBOPTIONS | joboptions.com

PRETTY STRANGE page 134

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- MODERN LIVING | www.hoogerbrugge.com
- BAD SCRABBLE HANDS | heybro.com/badscrabble
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- EMAIL ALERT! | intellisw.com

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- THE TERRIBLE SECRET OF SPACE | jonathonrobinson.com/secret.html
- NOBODY HERE | nobodyhere.com/justme
- THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL | janetreno.rotten.com/spiral
- UN CHIEN SPINNDALU | zompist.com/andalou.htm
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- AVANTGO | avantgo.com
- HOW TO IMPRESS YOUR DATE | zefrank.com/date_1/navigation.html
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- JESUS THE HOT AIR BALLOON | ship-of-fools.com/Gadgets/Witnessing/050.html

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- WWW.FOODSAFETY.GOV | www.foodsafety.gov
- U.S. FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION: RECALLS AND SAFETY ALERTS | www.fda.gov/opacom/7alerts.html
- THE VIRTUAL WALL | thevirtualwall.org

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- ESPN.COM | espn.com
- LISL | lisl.com

WEB GUIDE»

NEW, NOTABLE & FUN

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- COMEDY CENTRAL | comedycentral.com
- BLUEFLY | bluefly.com
- WSJ.COM: STARTUP JOURNAL | startupjournal.com
- BLOOMBERG.COM | bloomberg.com
- YAHOO! MUSIC | music.yahoo.com
- AOL HOMETOWN | hometown.aol.com
- LYCOS ENTERTAINMENT | entertainment.lycos.com
- NBCI | nbci.com
- @149 ST: NEW YORK CITY CYBER BENCH | at149st.com
- BROADWAY STYLE | movieplace.com/graffiti
- EBAY GOLF | pages.ebay.com/promo/golf
- THRASHER | thrashermagazine.com
- DERMATOLOGY IN THE CINEMA | www.skinema.com
- SCORECARD | www.scorecard.org
- BRAINPOP | brainpop.com
- STORY IN A BOX | astoryinabox.com
- LITERARY TRAVELER | literarytraveler.com
- AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 CLICKS | traveladventures.org
- NATIONALPARKS.ORG | nationalparks.org
- OMAR WEST'S COWBOY POETRY AT THE BAR-D RANCH | cowboypoetry.com
- WYLIE & THE WILD WEST | wylieww.com

ENTERTAINMENT & SPORTS

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- ORPHMEDIA | orphmedia.com
- THEONERING.NET | theonering.net

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- LEXISNEXIS | lexisnexis.com
- AMAZON.COM | amazon.com
- E-CENTIVES | e-centives.com

MUSIC: THE ROLLING STONES

- TIME IS ON OUR SIDE | mlink.net/%7Eian/stones.html
- ROLLING STONES: THE OFFICIAL STORE | stonesbazaar.com
- THE ROLLING STONES BEGGARS BANQUET | beggarsbanquetonline.com

SPORTS: PGA GOLF

- PGA.COM | pga.com
- PGATOUR.COM & GOLFWEB | pgatour.com
- TIGER WOODS OFFICIAL SITE | tigerwoods.com

POP CULTURE: RETRO ACTION

- BAD FADS MUSEUM | badfads.com
- THE '80S SERVER | www.80s.com
- REGRETTABLE FOOD GALLERY | lileks.com/institute/gallery

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GETAWAY GURU: ORBITZ TAKES OFF

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- EXPEDIA.COM | expedia.com
- TRAVELOCITY.COM | travelocity.com

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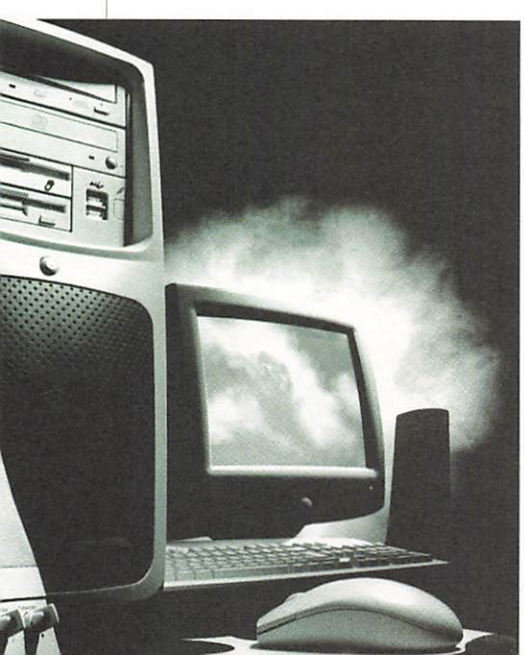

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- THE UNCORKED CELLAR | uncork.com.au
- HURRICANE WATCH 2001 | members.aol.com/jgraff/hcane.htm
- FLIPBROWSER | flipbrowser.com

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- ASK DR. WEIL | drweil.com
- DRKOOP.COM | drkoop.com
- TIRERACK.COM | tirerack.com
- EDMUNDS.COM: TIRES: TRAFFIC SAFETY TIPS | edmunds.com/ownership/maintenance/articles/43815/article.html
- CONSUMER REPORTS ONLINE | www.consumerreports.org
- PROCOL HARUM: BEYOND THE PALE | procolharum.com
- PROCOL HARUM: ALL THIS AND MORE | geocities.com/Area51/2202/procol/procol.htm

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- BILLPOINT | billpoint.com
- WESTERN UNION MONEYZAP | moneyzap.com
- MAXMANAGER | maxmanager.com
- ELUXURY | eluxury.com

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- IBILL: INTERNET BILLING COMPANY | ibillcs.com
- SEARCH SYSTEMS | pac-info.com
- GOOGLE | google.com
- VIVÍSIMO | vivisimo.com
- CONSUMER COMPLAINT FORM AGAINST VIDEO COMPUTER STORE | www.attorneygeneral.gov/ppd/bcp/compform_vcs/bcpform_vcs.cfm

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- L.L. BEAN | llbean.com
- ORVIS | orvis.com
- EASTERN MOUNTAIN SPORTS | easternmountainsports.com
- SIERRA DESIGNS | sierradesigns.com
- COLEMAN | www.coleman.com

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- AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY | cancer.org
- DRUGSTORE.COM | drugstore.com
- SAKS FIFTH AVENUE | saksfifthavenue.com
- BEAUTY.COM | beauty.com
- LANCÔME | lancome.com
- TIECRAFTERS | tiecrafters.com
- SPEEDO | speedo.com

STYLE: BAZAAR page 52

- MACYS.COM | macys.com
- THE SPORTS AUTHORITY | thesportsauthority.com
- CHAMPION | www.championusa.com
- ADIDAS | thestore.adidas.com

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- CHI-CHIAN | scifi.com/chichian
- IFILM | ifilm.com
- SCHRODINGER'S CAT | alwaysif.com/movie.asp?ID=2240&c=&cat=&sub=
- WWII ONLINE: BLITZKRIEG | wwiionline.com
- MEDAL OF HONOR | moh.ea.com
- ARCANUM | www.sierrastudios.com/games/arcanum
- MAFIAMOB.COM | mafiamob.com
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- GLORIA DELUXE | gloriadeluxe.com
- MOZART IN THE MORNING | kdfc.com
- POP CANDY | usatoday.com/community/chat/chatsked.htm
- N.E.W. SHOW | cnn.com/chat
- INVISIBLE HITS HOUR | cd101.com

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- SONY CLIÉ | sonystyle.com/vaio/clie
- U.S. ROBOTICS | www.usr.com
- VITRA | www.vitra.com
- YASHICA | yashica.com
- TIMEX | timex.com
- DIGISETTE | digisette.com

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- HOMESTEAD | homestead.com
- YAHOO! GEOCITIES | geocities.com
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- APPS.COM | apps.com
- MYCOMPUTER.COM | mycomputer.com

QUICK TIPS

- Q | qmgn.com
- GOBEEZ | gobeez.com
- GOBEEZ SETTINGS | gobeez.com/servlet/settings

LEARN IT

- INOCULATEIT PERSONAL EDITION | antivirus.cai.com
- ESAFE DESKTOP 3.0 | ealaddin.com/esafe/desktop/index.asp
- ZONEALARM | zonelabs.com
- SHIELDSUP! | grc.com
- ZDNET: UPDATES.COM | updates.com
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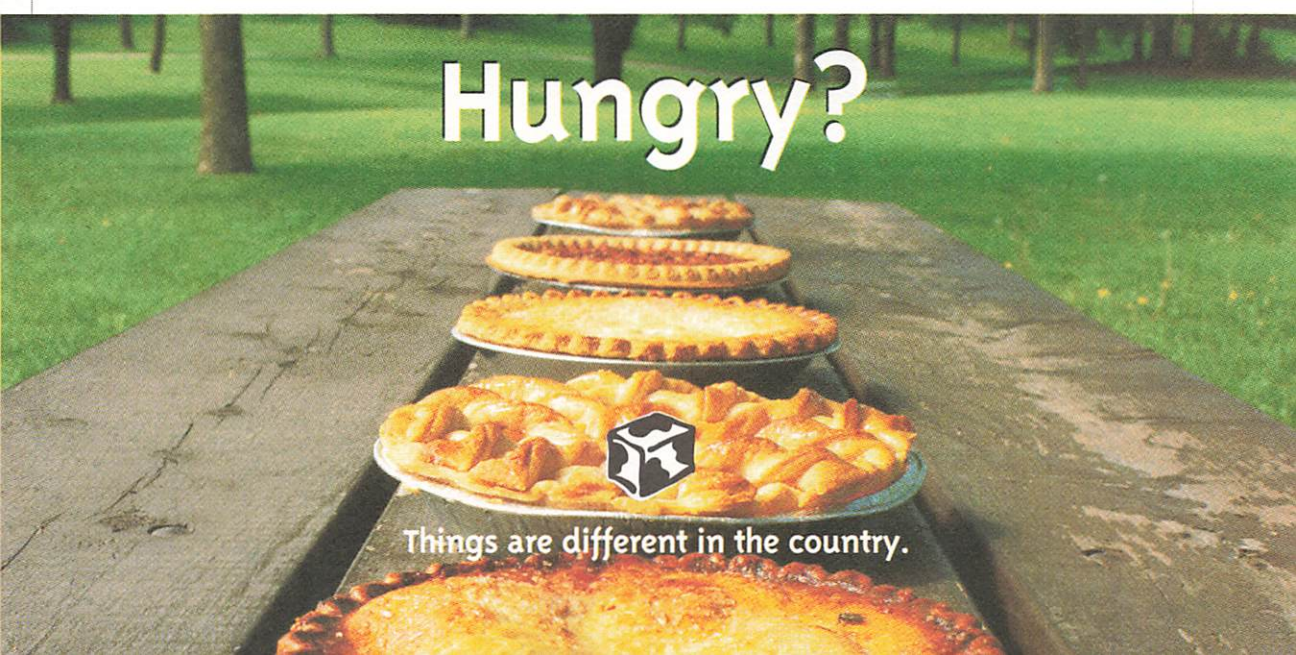

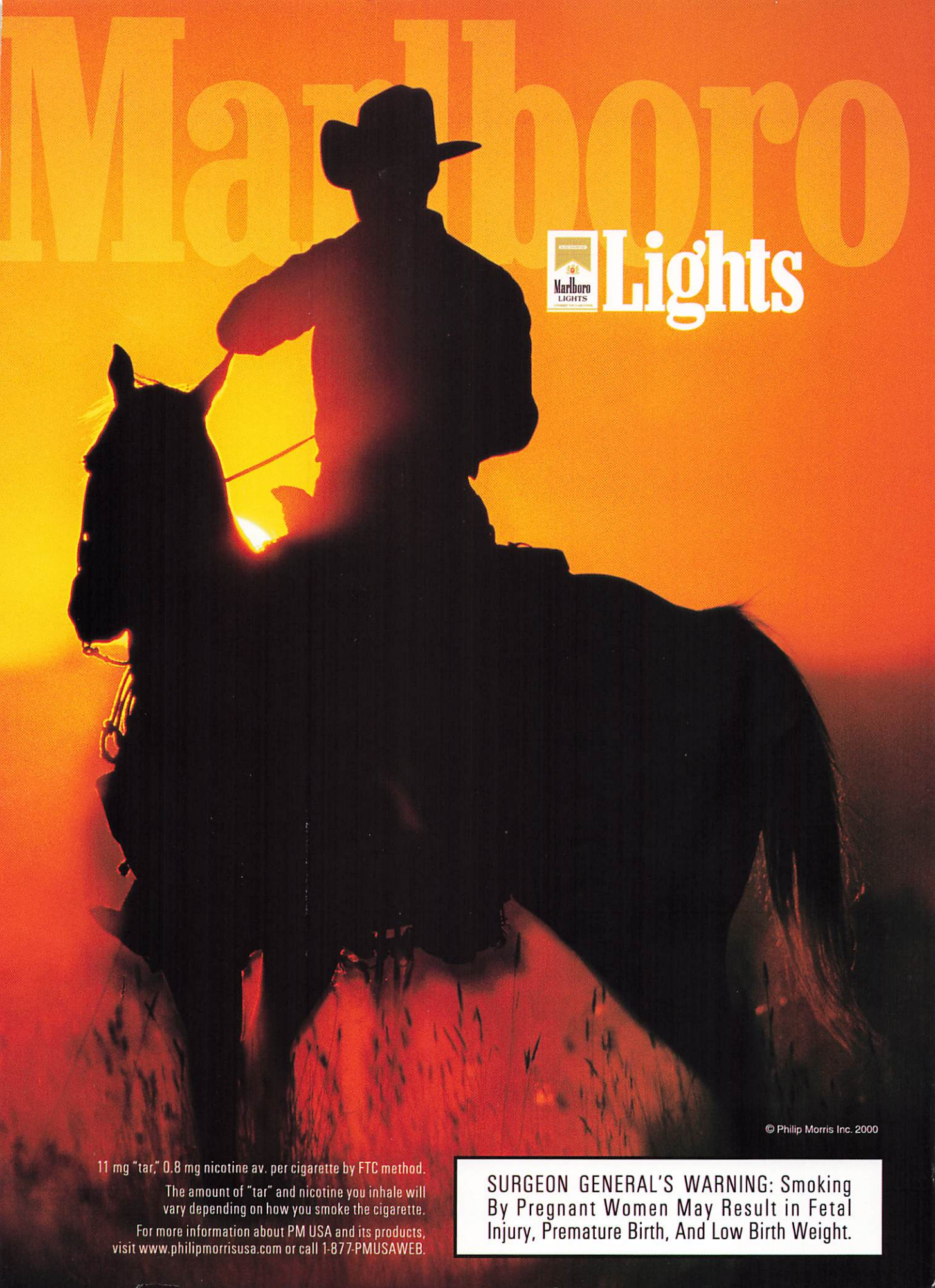
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